

A PELICAN BOOK

KENNETH WALKER

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# The Physiology of Sex

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'There is not only sound scientific  
knowledge here, but a breadth of human  
experience and culture  
rather too rare in scientific writers.'

*The Times Literary Supplement*



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POPULAR works on sex have appeared in large numbers in recent years: very few of them have treated the subject from all its aspects, physiological, emotional, and social, in a way which combines the imparting of the necessary information with a spirit of helpfulness.

Mr Walker provides a clear, straightforward statement of the facts of sex and its problems in the life of the individual and the community. He writes strictly as a scientist for adult readers, and he refrains from passing judgement, but he confesses his own belief that the questions raised cannot be satisfactorily answered in a world that is empty of spiritual values.

'Mr Walker's treatment of the subject is thorough and complete. Everything that you can find in Havelock Ellis, Bertrand Russell, or their American equivalents, you will find treated very honestly and fully in this little book. . . . His book shirks nothing, and every opinion that he expresses is candid and straightforward.' – *The New Generation*

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THE PHYSIOLOGY OF SEX  
KENNETH WALKER







THE  
PHYSIOLOGY OF SEX  
AND ITS SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

BY  
KENNETH WALKER

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## PREFACE

It was after some hesitation that I accepted an invitation to write a book on sex for the Pelican series. It seemed to me that a sufficient number of popular works on this subject had already appeared, and that there was no need for more. The silence of the Victorian age has been followed by a noisy interlude; sex has become a favourite topic of conversation, and a veritable spate of literature has issued from the Press. Such a reaction from the prudery of the preceding era was only to be expected, and if at times writers and conversationalists have forgotten that modesty is not merely a social convention but also a by-product of sexuality, their outspokenness is infinitely preferable to the hypocrisy of a previous age. The extravagances that have been noted during this period of reaction merely indicate that we are in an era of transition: the old values have been abandoned, but new ones have not yet been found. We have got rid of the ridiculous notion that sexuality is essentially immoral, that because the female plays a more passive part in union she therefore has no erotic needs, and that it is neither respectable nor proper to write of sexual love as an art; but we have been unable to discover a sexual ethic that shall take the place of what we have destroyed. What profit could result from adding yet another volume to the flood of books that has marked this period of transition? Already we have too much material for our consumption, and what we really need is not more books on the subject, but more time in which to digest them. But although the output of popular literature on this subject has been enormous, it must be admitted that much of it is unsatisfactory. Some of the books that have appeared are unnecessarily crude, some so sentimental as to be nauseating to the palate, and a still greater number so seasoned with propaganda that the original nature of the dish is undiscoverable.

It must indeed be admitted that it is extremely difficult to write a book on such a subject without allowing personal prejudice to intrude. Sexual love is so closely bound up with the emotions, and

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is so inevitably concerned with ethics, that it is almost impossible, in writing of it, not to point to some moral. As a result, almost every book on the subject is the vehicle for some propaganda. Nor can I claim that in the book that I eventually agreed to write I have avoided altogether the error into which others have fallen. However much I have tried to keep my own personality in the background, it has repeatedly thrust itself forward. Nevertheless, in spite of this intrusion, it has been my chief aim to present the facts, and to leave it to the reader to draw from them his own conclusions. There is no universal solution to the problems put by sex; every answer produces in its own turn a new question, and for each the reader must find his own solution. If the solution suggested by the writer is not one that commends itself to the reader, there will be no need for us to quarrel. Each has the right to his opinion, and each must respect the point of view of the other. Truth has many facets, and we can see only a few of them.

If one moral more than another has been emphasized in this work, it is the need of tolerance. The sexual impulse is an incalculable force that seeks expression in diverse ways. However sound the individual's constitution may be, the inevitable difficulties of the sexual life, and the constant need for its readjustment to inner and outer changes in conditions, may involve great hardships. Still greater are those hardships when the impulse happens to be abnormal, not through any fault of him who suffers from the sexual abnormality but from the nature of his congenital make-up. No one can claim complete normality for his own particular pattern of sexuality, so that if charity be needed in any sphere of human activity, it is needed most in judging the sexual actions of those who do not happen to be like us. Yet it is in the sphere of sexual ethics that a charitable outlook is most often lacking. Nowhere have we shown less generosity than in the estimation of each other's sexual difficulties, and nowhere have we adopted more whole-heartedly the mentality of the Scribes and the Pharisees than in our judgement of other people's private lives.

And it is not only in our judgements as private individuals that we have shown a lack of understanding. The Church and the Law are equally uncharitable in the harshness with which they punish any offender against their code of ethics. It was the Church that till recently looked upon sexuality as a sin and taught mankind to

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regard marriage as a concession to man's frailty. It is the Law that still continues to view sexual deviations as vices, the only treatment for which is imprisonment. Pulpit and Bench are equally severe in their judgement of sexual offenders, equally ignorant of all that science has learnt of the nature of sex and its manifestations. In his summary of the commandments St Paul puts 'Thou shalt not commit adultery' before 'Thou shalt not kill', and the majority of churchmen still regard love outside wedlock as more reprehensible than hate inside it.

If in this book I have repeatedly criticized the Church, it is not from any irreligious bias. I am convinced that the world is suffering deeply from the absence of a spiritual outlook, and that it is not to the scientist, but to the religious leader, that we must turn in our extremity.

It is necessary that I should preface my criticisms of the Church with two remarks. The first is that there is now a movement within that body itself in favour of studying questions on which it has hitherto made pronouncements without knowing anything about them; and second, that although the Church's emphasis on sexual immorality as the 'one great sin' has aggravated our difficulties, it has not created them.

There is no doubt that the Church is beginning to realize that if the clergy are to be of any assistance to their parishioners in struggling with the problems of life, they must be equipped with at least an elementary knowledge of sex. There are also indications that its official attitude to sexuality is changing. Even such a ponderous and conservative body as the Lambeth Conference of 1930 asserted that 'the sex-life is a primary part of a process of soul-education by which we grow towards the fulfilment of God's intention for all his children'. Marriage therefore need not be looked upon by churchmen as a concession to man's weakness, but may be regarded as having a positive value in assisting soul-education through the agency of sexuality. This is a great change-over from the old idea that man's sexual urge belonged to the lower part of his nature, and consequently stood in the way of his spiritual progress. The Church's view that the same activity that within wedlock furthers the soul's growth, outside wedlock destroys it (however spiritual that extra-marital love may be), remains a necessary part of ecclesiastical teaching. To the Church marriage is not only a means of safeguarding the children, but also a sacra-

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ment that alone justifies the use of a natural function. The marriage ceremony, therefore, is regarded as a sharply drawn line that marks off the moral from the immoral: it is the grace that hallows the meal and renders the food nourishing.

But, as has already been stated, the Church cannot be made responsible for the difficulties with which we are surrounded. Love-inadequacy is essentially a disorder of modern civilization, a payment demanded of us by our culture. The sexual difficulties that have become so appallingly common are practically unknown amongst primitive races. This is not because the sexuality of savages is stronger than that of educated man, but because it is poorer. The psychic components of love are almost unrecognized in primitive countries. Cultured man, on the other hand, has, by the aid of the spirit, created for himself a larger love, a love with which his physical side cannot keep pace. Not only has the spiritual outstripped the physical, but the two are often at logger-heads. Modern man is the victim of a thousand inhibitions; his intellect and his emotions are at war with his body. Stekal, in his work on Impotence, has pictured this war as a struggle between the brain and the spinal cord: 'In the numerous tales of woe, as I would like to call my case-sheet histories, we have in fact the struggle between the brain and the spinal cord. The sexual life of animals is an imperative of the spinal cord. Primitive man must have been created thus. All his thoughts and strivings were directed towards fulfilling the demands of the spinal cord, the impulses. Civilized man is in a constant struggle with primitive man.

The brain avenges itself against the spinal cord, in that by means of an immense superstructure of inhibitions it prevents the healthy sexual reflex from functioning.'

It must be admitted that the Church, by debasing man's sexual longings, by its story of original sin, and by its playing on man's fear of damnation, has done much to foster this growth of inhibitions, but it has not created it. Fear is the arch-enemy in the life of both nations and individuals, the Medusa head that fixes all activity in the stillness of stone, and, frankly, modern man is frightened of his sexuality. Only if we can free ourselves from our terror of this restless force within us can we hope to reduce the appallingly large harvest of sexual disorders that we are now reaping. And if this reduction is to be brought about, sane teaching on the subject of sex must begin early. It is for this reason that



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I have included in the following pages a chapter on the all-important subject of sex education.

In the preparation of this book I have made free use of the writings of several authors, to whom I would acknowledge my special indebtedness. Foremost amongst these is the *Psychology of Sex* of the late Havelock Ellis. It is, indeed, doubtful whether any work on sex could be written without the author being compelled to acknowledge his obligation to that kindly and erudite authority. Other works upon which I have drawn, and to which the reader in search of more information would do well to refer, are the chapter on 'Sex and Evolution' in P. D. Ouspensky's *New Model of the Universe*, Marañón's *Evolution of Sex*, Wilhelm Stekel's *Impotence in the Male*, W. Richmond's *An Introduction to Sex Education*, B. P. Wiesner's *Sex*, and lastly *The Science of Life*, by H. G. Wells, Julian Huxley, and G. P. Wells.

## PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

TWELVE years have passed since the appearance of this book and I have revised it and added to it, not so much because the material in the first edition was out of date, but because I wished to increase its usefulness. That it had been useful has been indicated by the large number of letters I have received from unknown readers, letters which have been of help to me in the preparation of this new edition. Much of what had previously been written required no alteration, for no spectacular advance has been made in the biology of sex. It is in the sections dealing with the impact of sexuality on society that the greatest changes will be found. Because homosexuality is a problem of the greatest importance to society in general, as well as to the unfortunate individual himself, I have devoted an entire chapter to this subject.

A new Pelican on the Psychology of Sex is in course of preparation and it will appear in the early months of next year under the title, *Sex and Society*. I have written it in collaboration with Mr Peter Fletcher, a psychologist who possesses great practical experience of the problems to which sexuality gives rise. It may be thought that in the present volume I have been too often guilty of crossing the frontier between biology and psychology and have thereby trespassed on the territory of this later book. My defence is that I recognize no such boundary line between body and mind

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and am quite unable to discuss the one without at the same time alluding to the other. Nor do I think that, philosophy apart, there is a disadvantage in these excursions of a surgeon into the territory of another expert, for approaching, as he does, a psychological problem from a different direction, he may easily see a different aspect of it. In preparing this second edition of *The Physiology of Sex* I have had help from two books, *Patterns of Sexual Behaviour*, by Clellan S. Ford and Frank A. Beach, and from C. H. Waddington's chapter on 'The Biology of Sex' in *Sex in Social Life*, edited by Sybil Neville Rolfe.

## CHAPTER 1

### BIOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

EVERY student of biology knows that although sex is intimately linked with reproduction, it is not essential to it. The most primitive method of multiplying – the method used by the smallest and simplest creatures, like bacteria – is by splitting the body into two halves, each of which grows into a new individual. In this method of reproduction by what is known as ‘binary fission’ the offspring is not merely a detached portion of the parent, for the *whole* parent becomes the offspring. The parent leaves no corpse, but lives in his offspring. He loses his identity, but thereby escapes death.

This multiplication by binary fission is by no means confined to unicellular organisms; it occurs also in many sea anemones and in worms. Sometimes, however, the method is modified by making the two products of division unequal, reproduction being by means of the cutting off from the parent cell of a small portion or bud. This has the advantage of allowing the parent to retain his individuality, his adult advantages. Whilst the bud that has been thrown off is under the necessity of organizing itself into a new individual, the parent body remains active and organized. Individuality is retained, but at the price of future death. Only a fraction of the budding parent lives in his offspring, and therefore only a fraction is immortal.

In the reproduction of these lowly forms of life, sex would seem to play no part. Yet, on closer examination, it may be that even here, in the fission of unicellular organisms, may be found the beginning of sex. Although the amoeba multiplies by binary fission, it would seem that its capacity for this method of reproduction is not unlimited. Some-

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times these unicellular organisms seem to become exhausted and to lose the power of reproduction unless two individuals come together and conjugate. By conjugation is meant close contact followed by interchange of nuclear and other substances. After this exchange has been effected, the two amoebae separate and continue to reproduce by fission. Although this process would not appear to be essential if the environment in which the amoebae live is perfect, perfection of environment is seldom long maintained by Nature, and conjugation may be regarded as a necessary adjunct to their reproduction.

Does this occasional but by no means obligatory conjugation of two individual protozoa mark the beginning of sex in the evolutionary scale? It is difficult to be certain of the answer to this question, but whether it be yes or no, the exchange of cellular material in conjugation has much in common with that which takes place in sexual reproduction. Primarily, sexual reproduction implies the fusion of nuclei from two separate individuals. As in the case of the amoebae, there is no need for these two reproductive cells to be different, but differences are almost universal in sexually reproducing organisms. These differences allow of a division of labour, to the male cell being allotted the active role in fertilization, and to the female the responsibility of storing nutriment for the new individual resulting from the union.

Science is concerned with the explaining of mechanisms. It attempts to satisfy our curiosity as to *how* things work, but to the question *why* it generally turns a deaf ear. If primarily reproduction is a sexless thing, why does sex more and more intrude as we rise in the evolutionary scale? What advantages does this complication of sex, this obligatory fusion of specialized cells, confer on the organism?

The only satisfactory answer that can be given to this question of the *why* of sex is that provided by the student of evolution. Life from his point of view is in a condition of flux, in a continual state of becoming and of never having

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become. In order to adapt itself to its changing surroundings, it is continually making new experiments, trying out now this mutation and now that. These new experiments in structure are made possible through the appearance in the individual organism of mutations – mutations that, if successful, are perpetuated in the race, but, if unsuccessful, are thrown on one side through the agency of natural selection. If we accept this theory of the evolutionist, it is obvious that those organisms that make the greatest number of experiments are more likely to hit upon a useful method of adaptation, whilst those that make few experiments are more likely to fail in this struggle to survive. Once we accept the principle that richness in mutation confers an advantage on the race, it is obvious that if two individuals agree to pool their mutation resources, they will gain an immediate advantage from the numerous permutations and combinations of these combined variations. If, for example, two organisms in a given length of time produce, say, ten mutations, each will in the end possess these ten mutations and nothing more. If, however, reproduction is always preceded by a fusing of the two individuals and a pooling of their resources, there will be the new possibility of these ten mutations being combined in so many different ways that in the end the species will be in possession of not ten but hundreds of new types.

Such, then, is the explanation given by the evolutionist of the advantage gained by a sexual method of reproduction. Mutations provide the raw material on which natural selection works, the clay in the hands of the sculptor. Sexual reproduction, by allowing of countless combinations of mutations, renders the clay more plastic and more amenable to the sculptor's hands. The greater the number of mutations, the better the sculptor Natural Selection can work. In the present state of our knowledge this is the only explanation that can be given of why, as we ascend the evolutionary scale, sex entangles itself more and more with

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the reproductive powers, until, in ourselves, the two are inseparable.

Whereas in the unicellular organisms all the activities that make up life must of necessity be carried out within the confines of a single cell, in the multicellular organisms specialization becomes possible; some cells devote themselves to the task of nutrition, others to that of protection, yet others to locomotion. Quite early in the process of specialization is the handing over of the function of reproduction to certain cells. These cells, made responsible for the perpetuation of the race, are known as gametes, and it is to those creatures that possess them that the term sex can first be applied. Reproductive cells differ in several ways from all the other cells of the body, one essential difference being that the material of which they are composed is self-sufficient and bears within it all the potentialities that are necessary for the formation of a new individual. One cell in itself is incapable of giving rise to a new individual, but in conjunction with another of a somewhat different type this becomes possible.

The most primitive sex cells or gametes, such as those found in many plants, appear so alike as to be practically indistinguishable. Nevertheless, they must be regarded as different, for without their fusion, reproduction cannot occur; alone they perish, but united they give rise to a new being. As, however, we rise in the evolutionary scale, the difference between the two gametes, the distinguishing features of male and female, become more and more apparent. If we study these differences carefully it becomes obvious that one, the male gamete, plays an active role, and the other, the female, plays a passive part in fertilization and an active part in providing nourishment for the new individual. Since to the female gamete is allotted the responsibility of supplying nutriment to the 'zygote' or product of fusion, it is not surprising that the female or egg cell tends to become more bulky in order that it may have space in which

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to store more food. The male gamete, on the other hand, whose responsibilities cease with the act of fertilization, sacrifices everything to mobility and retains its small size. In order that it may be able to seek out the female cell, it develops a vigorous tail, by means of which it can propel itself through fluid to a considerable speed. Such highly specialized reproductive cells as the ovum and the spermatozoon differ widely not only from each other, but also from all the other cells of the organism that has produced them

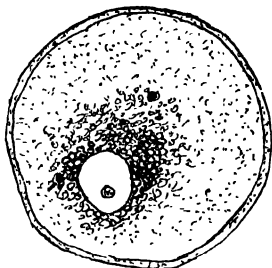


Fig. 1. An ovum and a spermatozoon drawn on the same scale and magnified approximately 200 diameters.

(see Fig. 1). Take, for example, the size of the egg cell. This may be many thousand times larger than any other cell in the body, and the egg cells of many birds are so packed with nutriment that they are used as articles of human food. Their great size is, of course, due to the necessity of their containing sufficient food for nourishing the embryo during the whole of its development. The male gamete shows much less variation in size than does the egg; on the other hand, it specializes in the development of all the complicated structures of head, middle piece, and tail.

Appearing first only in the specialized cells of reproduction, sex tends more and more, as we ascend the evolution-

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ary scale, to invade the other parts of the body. The male as a whole, and not merely his reproductive cells, becomes organized in the direction of maleness: that is, of a creature that seeks out and mates with the female. The female, as a whole, and not merely the egg cell, specializes in efficient storage of material for the developing embryo. This invasion of the whole body by the attributes of sex is shown not only in the body structure but also in its chemistry. Later we shall see that sex does not stop at a complete subjugation of the body to its own ends, but spreads also to the realm of mind. Appropriate instincts and emotions are developed in the male and female of the species, instincts and emotions that fit the one for his active role in searching for and fertilizing the egg, and the other for her function of nourishing and preserving the embryo.

Once organisms have been segregated into the two forms of male and female a new problem arises – namely, how best to secure the meeting of the specialized reproductive cells on whose union depends the perpetuation of the race. Nature has utilized many devices for this purpose, and many of them are so uncertain that they result in enormous wastage of material. In the more primitive forms of life, and more particularly amongst creatures of restricted mobility, myriads of male gametes are formed, in the hope that one at least will be carried by such chance agents as currents of air or water in the required direction. Sponges and oysters provide examples of this hazardous and wasteful method of fertilization. Fish also, even although they possess the advantages of mobility, breed in a manner that is almost as primitive. It is the usual custom amongst female fishes to deposit their eggs in a favourable place, and for the male to swim over them discharging a milky fluid containing myriads of spermatozoa. Since, however, the male fish deliberately seeks out the neighbourhood of the eggs before ejecting his reproductive cells, we have in this somewhat hazardous method of fertilization the beginnings of what may be called



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sexual attraction. It is a step forward from the reproduction of sponges.

It is obvious, however, that all methods of fertilization that depend on such phenomena as air and water currents, or the action of third parties such as bees and butterflies, are uncertain and wasteful. The safest method of securing fertilization is that the male cells should be deposited close to the female cells. All vertebrates and many of the invertebrates adopt this method of fertilization, a method that depends for its success on the existence of a mutual attraction between the two sexes.

The earliest stage in the bringing together of the two sexes in order that fertilization of the ova may occur is to be found in certain species of fish. Whereas a great many male fish merely swim over the deposits of eggs left behind by the female and discharge a cloud of spermatozoa into the water surrounding them, the male dog-fish seeks out the female and curves his lithe body round hers and then discharges spermatozoa into the neighbourhood of her genital orifice, thus materially increasing the likelihood of their reaching the ova. As we ascend in the scale more highly specialized external organs of sex are evolved in preparation for a more and more intimate form of the coupling act. Many curious methods of carrying out this act are to be found in the animal world, for example, amongst spiders. One variety of male spiders carry on their heads appendages resembling syringes by means of which they can draw up spermatozoa from their own reproductive systems and retain them for future use in a storage tank chamber. Having filled this storage chamber the male spider seeks out the female, courts her – a courageous act since he is liable to be eaten – and if he is accepted by her, injects sperm into her sexual orifice.

An even more bizarre form of the sexual act takes place in a certain species of octopus. One of the arms of the male octopus becomes specialized into an external genital organ which the octopus loads, as the spider did, with its own

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sperms. The loaded arm is then thrust into the genital aperture of the female octopus and the semen discharged. In yet another species a still more remarkable event takes place. The genital arm of the male octopus, duly charged with sperm, becomes separated off from the body and goes swimming off on its own to perform the copulating act. C. H. Waddington, to whom I am indebted for knowledge of this unusual form of coitus, states that when the older naturalists first found female octopi with these isolated arms attached to them they were under the impression that they had discovered a new type of marine organism to which they gave the name *Hectocotylus*. It was only when they found specimens of this genital arm still attached to their owner prior to their setting off on their sexual pilgrimages, that their true nature was realized. (*Sex in Social Life*. Edited by S. Neville Rolfe, p. 75.)

Such methods of fertilization as these are of course exceptional, the more usual one being the development in the male of a channel terminating in an external protuberance, or penis, and in the female the development of a cavity or vagina into which the male organ can be inserted. Yet, as Waddington has pointed out, Nature is so rich in forms that the converse of this can be found in her works. In certain flies it is the female which develops the external protuberance and the male which receives this into a sperm-containing cavity. As we follow the stairway of evolution upwards we find that the external genital organs become more and more highly evolved and capable of ensuring that the spermatozoa and the ova meet. They also become highly sensitive organs with a rich supply of nerves and blood-vessels, and through the engorgement of the latter the external genitalia are capable of becoming turgid and firm. In consequence of this intimate connexion of the genitalia with the central nervous system the act of transferring the sperm is no longer an indifferent matter to the two sexes, but an act charged with excitement and rich sensations. From a biological standpoint

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this still further increases its efficiency and, as will be seen later, ensures that union occurs at propitious moments when the ova are ready for fertilization. Psychological reactions now begin to be interwoven into the act and by enriching it to contribute to its success.

We have seen that reproduction becomes inextricably entangled with sex as we rise in the animal scale. Yet, in the words of H. G. Wells, 'Nature is a tricky worker; as living things have evolved she has vacillated, and often enough she has changed her mind and gone back on her previous acts. One or two animals are curious in that they have returned to sexless methods of reproduction; evolved from purely sexual stocks, they have found a way of dodging the entanglement.' Wells is referring here to such organisms as the greenfly and water-fleas, whose females produce eggs as if for sexual reproduction, and then dispense with the service of the male. Nevertheless the eggs develop and fatherless offspring are born, thus providing a true example of 'parthenogenesis', or virgin reproduction.

Experimenters have been able to reproduce the same phenomenon artificially. Loeb first fertilized the eggs of sea-urchins by chemical means, and other workers followed suit with those of starfish and of frogs. In the case of the starfish, raising the temperature was sufficient to start development, whilst in that of the frog, pricking the eggs with a pin dipped in blood had the same effect. As the ova of mammals are inaccessible to the experimenter, it is not yet possible to say whether they would react to similar treatment.

These experiments throw light on the function of the male cell or spermatozoon in normal sexual reproduction. In fusing with the ovum, a spermatozoon produces two effects: firstly it activates the egg cell and makes development possible, and secondly it blends with it, thus contributing material from another stock and affording a basis for father-to-child heredity. The first activity can be looked upon simply as a trick for preventing a premature start in develop-

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ment before fusion has taken place. The second activity is the essential process in sexual reproduction, and at the same time the clue to its meaning.

We are now in a position to arrive at some conclusion concerning the biological significance of sex. Starting from the point of view that sex is the means by which Nature secures for her experiments the maximum of mutations upon which to work, we can look upon sexual attraction as the method by which she secures the mingling of those mutations on which the success of her work depends. Reverting again to the simile of the sculptor, sex is the ingredient in the clay that gives it its maximum plasticity, and sexual attraction the most economical method of mixing it. Both subjects will be dealt with in this book; first, the mechanism by means of which the two sexes, male and female, are developed, and second, the means by which they are brought together.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE DIFFERENTIATION OF SEX IN THE INDIVIDUAL

HAVING traced back sexual reproduction to its beginnings on the lower levels of the evolutionary scale, we are now in a position to discuss the development of sex in the individual. The capacity to reproduce itself is one of the basic properties of living organisms and it is a function which has been subjected to intensive study during the last fifty years. As a result of this a great deal is now known about it. Take, for example, the important subject of sex determination. What decides whether the embryo developing in the womb is to develop into a male or into a female?

In former years a great number of views were put forward to explain this conundrum: the sex of the offspring was determined by the quantity or quality of the mother's food, by her prenatal impressions, by the ovary from which the egg cell had come (one ovary forming male egg cells and the other female egg cells), and by many other supposed causes that had only one thing in common – namely, that they rested on no scientific foundation. Now it is practically established that the sex of the new individual is decided from the moment of conception, and that all our attempts to produce a male or a female by treatment of the mother during pregnancy are futile. In mammals generally (it is the reverse in birds) the male forms two varieties of gametes or spermatozoa, that have been termed by biologists *X*-bearing and *Y*-bearing. The female, on the other hand, furnishes only one type of ovum, which can be termed *X*-bearing. These uniform egg cells are capable of being fertilized by either kind of spermatozoa: an *X*-bearing spermatozoon so as to form *XX*, a female, or by a *Y*-bearing spermatozoon so as

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to form  $XY$ , a male. The actual difference in the two types of spermatozoa lies in the arrangement of the chromosome network of the nucleus, so that, in Crew's words, 'in every zygote, be it  $XX$  or  $XY$  in sex chromosomes combination, there are the physical bases of developmental impulses which strive to impose upon the developing individual a male type and a female type of differentiation respectively.'

It has already been stated that determination of sex by the chromosome constituents of the spermatozoa is true more particularly of mammals. Strange to say, in certain other types of animal it is the ovum that determines the sex of the offspring; for example, in birds, moths, and butterflies the spermatozoa are chromosomally symmetrical, while it is the egg that is of two kinds. Here, therefore, it is the mother who determines the sex of the offspring.

Males and females are produced in approximately the same numbers. Since the male parent forms the two types of gamete in equal numbers, the chances of a male-forming gamete or a female forming gamete reaching the ovum and succeeding in fertilizing it are more or less balanced.

This, however, is not absolutely true. Actually, when we examine human statistics we find that a slightly greater number of boys are born than girls, the ratio in most white races being between 101 and 108 boys to every 100 girls. Indeed, if we take the still-births and miscarriages into account, the preponderance of male over female conceptions will be found to be even greater, and it is probably true that somewhere in the neighbourhood of 120 male conceptions occur to every 100 female conceptions. Yet statistics show that in a country like Great Britain women preponderate over males, the preponderance increasing steadily with every decade of life. This is due to the fact that, constitutionally, males are less resistant than females. Not only is this susceptibility of the male to accident shown by the greater number of male intra-uterine deaths, but also by the higher mortality rates of males throughout the whole

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of life. The slightly greater vigour of the Y-bearing spermatozoa and the higher ratio of male conceptions and births are therefore more than offset by the higher mortality of the male. Contrary to accepted opinion, the female is the stronger sex.

It has sometimes been asked whether a tendency to have an excess of either sons or of daughters may not be an inherited trait, and it is quite true that there are families that seem to specialize in producing male children and others in producing female children. But when the matter is gone into more thoroughly these all-male and all-female families can be accounted for by the law of chance. There is no reason to believe that a run of sons or of daughters occurs more frequently than do runs of good luck or of bad luck on the roulette table. It is unnecessary therefore to postulate an inherited disposition to produce offspring of one sex.

Now that something is known about the mechanism of sex determination, it is possible that some day we may gain control over it, so that we shall be able to obtain a male or a female offspring at will. It is quite probable that within the next fifty years this will be achieved. Measurement of the head length of the spermatozoa in a specimen of semen from different mammals, including man, has shown the existence of two categories of size, the two groups probably being identical with the two types of gametes, X and Y. If, therefore, male-determining and female-determining sperms differ in size, some method of separation – for example, by careful centrifugalization – may eventually be found. This will allow of the artificial insemination of the female with the required type of spermatozoa, so that the birth of a male or a female may be obtained, according to desire.

It may be doubted, however, whether the exercise of control over the birth of male or female children will contribute to human happiness. Unfortunately, our knowledge has got a long way ahead of our fitness to employ it, and, as in the case of children playing with gunpowder, harm rather than

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good generally comes from our new discoveries. Control of the sex of offspring will not be an unmixed blessing in a world ruled by power politics, even though it may prove of benefit to the stock-breeder. It is to be hoped that the separation of male-bearing spermatozoa from female-bearing will prove more difficult than has been supposed.

While it is true that the sex of the embryo is determined at the moment of fertilization by the chromosome constitution of the zygote, a long time has to pass before it is possible by any examination of the structure of the embryo to decide whether it is the beginning of a male or a female. A decision as to the sex of an animal must be based on an examination of its sex-glands or gonads, for any opinion resting on the external appearances only is liable to error. In the very young embryo no trace of sex-glands can be found, so that no opinion on the subject of its sex can be offered. In the human embryo, for example, it is only between the fifth and seventh week of gestation that the primitive embryonic cells that will ultimately turn out to be testes or ovaries are laid down. As at this time the embryonic cells are still sexually indifferent, the sex of the embryo must remain still unrecognizable. It would, indeed, be nearer the truth to say that at this stage the human embryo, like that of all other vertebrates, is starting its career as a hermaphrodite, ready to turn in the direction of maleness or femaleness according to the mechanism that will shortly come into action. Not only has the primitive sex-gland a foot in both camps, but so also has the system of genital ducts that is starting to develop in connexion with it. The developing embryo possesses, indeed, the rudimentary duct systems and external sexual organs of both the male and the female. If it develops in the direction of maleness, the male system of ducts will grow larger and the female remain rudimentary, and if in the direction of femaleness, the converse will happen. It is for this reason that in the adult man vestiges of a uterus and of other female structures are found, and in the adult woman primitive remains of male organs.



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These relics of the opposite sex are reminders of the fact that at an early stage of our careers we possessed rudimentary organs of both kinds. Sitting on a hermaphrodite fence, we were prepared to move in either direction.

We are now confronted with an obvious question. If at the beginning the embryo is endowed with both male and female structures, what is it that decides whether the bisexual genital system shall turn in the male or the female direction respectively? The answer to this question is supplied by certain animal experiments. As we are not yet able to carry out such an operation as the removal of the gonads of a developing embryo, we are forced to draw a conclusion from observations made on new-born animals in which, although sexual development has advanced well beyond the indifferent stage, it has not yet reached completion. If the testes are removed from a new-born male rat, all normal post-natal development in the direction of maleness immediately ceases; not only does the external male organ of sex, the penis, remain tiny, but the development of such accessory sex-glands as the prostate and seminal vesicles proceeds no further. The complete arrest of sexual development brought about by castration is easily observed, for in the normal animal the growth of these structures during the first few weeks after birth is exceedingly rapid.

If we take one of these castrated rats and either graft on to it testes taken from a brother of the same litter, or inject it with active testicular extract, the arrested development of the male organs is immediately resumed. These experiments clearly show that in the new-born animal the continuation of development in the direction of maleness depends on the existence of some substance secreted by the testicle. It is probable, therefore, that in the unborn animal also the same mechanism is at work, and that the impetus towards maleness is supplied by the internal secretion of the developing testicles. Actually it has been found that for the emergence of maleness in the developing organism two conditions are

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necessary: (a) the secretion of a male substance, (b) the presence of undeveloped tissues, or what are known as 'primordia', capable of reacting to that substance. So far we have considered only the first of these two requirements, namely, the existence of an internal secretion. The second requirement or the capacity of the tissues to respond to the stimulus of the hormones will be dealt with later.

Before going further it will be necessary to make a short digression and discuss the nature of this substance formed in the testicles which passes into the blood-stream and guides the growth of the body in the direction of maleness. The discovery of this chemical regulation of the body is one of the most exciting in the whole history of physiology. It is an important principle in the mechanics of the body – as important as the control of its activity by means of the nervous system. The development of the sexual characteristics as the result of the action of sexual secretions is only one example of it. Another instance of chemical control that was known long before the discovery of hormones is the regulation of breathing through the amount of carbon dioxide present in the blood. As, however, we are not now concerned with physiology in general, but only with the sexual mechanism of the body, we will confine our attention to the control exercised over the body by what are known as the ductless glands. They are also termed the endocrine glands, from a Greek word meaning internal secretion. All of these endocrine glands – the pituitary, the thyroid, and the suprarenals, as well as the testes and ovaries, produce 'hormones' or chemical messengers which, passing into the blood-stream, help to regulate the mechanism of the body. It has been known for many centuries that a castrated male animal differs from a normal male both in temperament and structure; that an ox is dull and manageable, that it has horns intermediate in shape between those of a cow and a bull, and that it puts on fat more readily. Nevertheless, it was only after certain other discoveries had been made in connexion with the thy-

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roid, that it was realized that these changes were due to the ox having been deprived of the hormones normally secreted by the testicles. So also was it found that myxoedema was due to the absence of thyroid secretion, and the changes seen in Addison's disease to a failure of the suprarenals. The next step was an obvious one – namely, to try to make good the effects of deprivation by extracting from the glands of another animal the required secretion, and then injecting the extract into the animal that had suffered loss. In this way were laid the foundations of what is known as substitution therapy: a method of treatment that has had such wonderful results in dealing with such conditions as myxoedema, diabetes, and latterly with sexual defects. At first the only extracts available were weak and full of impurities, but, thanks to the work of the biochemists, light has been thrown on the chemical constitution of the various hormones, and many of them have even been manufactured out of other substances. This is now true of the male hormone known as testosterone, which is found in such small quantities in the testicle that it is more profitable to obtain it from other sources.

In the female the part played by the secretion of the ovary proves to be much less important than is that exerted by the secretion of the testis in the male. The removal of both ovaries from new-born rats does not perceptibly slow down the development of the female organs, nor does the injection of the female hormone or oestrin into castrates hasten it. There appears, therefore, to be an essential difference in the mechanism of development of the male and female rat. Although for the growth of the male organs of sex the existence of male hormone is essential, the genital system of the female is capable of developing without it. This conclusion has been put in another way by B. P. Wiesner, who writes 'that the developmental tendencies inherent in the genital primordia of a female are sufficient to effect formation of a female system, whereas male development requires the

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presence of male hormone. Female development is a-hormonic (without hormone) until puberty, male development is hormonal.'

Our control over the mechanism of sexual development allows of our asking and answering quite a number of interesting questions. What happens if we expose the developing female to the influences not of female but of male hormones? Experiments have been made along these lines also, and the results are very striking. When male hormone is injected into a young female rat not only does the external female organ of sex or clitoris grow into a penis, but so also do the rudimentary male duct systems in the female undergo marked development. In other words, the young female rat develops male characteristics; it becomes masculinized.

It would appear, therefore, that the female primordia are capable of male differentiation when the conditions of male differentiation are imitated – that is to say, when male hormone is brought into play. What happens when, conversely, we expose the male to female differentiation? Before answering this question it must be recalled to mind that the conditions of female development are negative rather than positive – that is to say, that they depend on the absence of male hormone rather than the presence of female hormone. The only experiment, therefore, that it is necessary to perform in order to answer this question is to eliminate the action of the male hormone by castrating new-born male rats. If we remove the testicles of young rats, we find that not only is the growth of all the male structures in the body arrested, but that female traits in the body begin to appear. These changes will be more apparent if we select for our experiments animals in which some external characteristic, like the colour of the coat, is different in the two sexes. In such animals castration of the young male is followed by a change-over to a female type of fur. So, also, do we find that such female characteristics as the high-pitched voice and the horizontal upper limit to the pubic hair appear in the case of the

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male human castrate. From these and other experiments it can be concluded that if the testes are removed early enough in a mammal's life, feminine traits will always assert themselves – in other words, every mammal tends to turn into a female. The female may therefore be regarded as the basic type of the mammalian species, and the male as the more highly differentiated type derived from it by the action of the male hormone. Man may be considered therefore as derived from woman rather than woman from man. The myth of Lilith and not the story of the Garden of Eden is the better parable of man's birth. He, and not woman, represents Nature's second thoughts, the more specialized type, the rib taken from the woman's side and shaped into the likeness of a companion.

Amongst birds the conditions that determine the development of many of the external characteristics of sex are exactly the reverse. Removal of the ovaries from hens and ducks results in their assuming the plumage of the male. The male plumage of the cock and the drake is therefore not the result of the stimulating action of the male hormone on the body, but of the absence of female hormone. This is confirmed by the observation that if we give injections of oestrin to the ovariectomized hen, the characteristic plumage of the female is regained. It is the hen that is derived from the cock, and if Lilith kept poultry, they were probably all cocks. Sometimes these changes in its external appearance occur in a hen spontaneously, through the destruction of its ovaries by such diseases as tuberculosis. When this happens, the fowl that its owners formerly regarded as a hen then appears to them to have become a cock. Spontaneous sex reversal is, indeed, by no means a very rare thing in the farmyard, but the change is more apparent than real, for fowls that have undergone reversal in their plumage continue to behave as heretofore. Only if a hen be given an injection of male hormone, or if she possesses a latent testicle that assumes activity is the reversal pushed still further, so that the comb

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and spurs develop and the fowl crows and behaves like a cockerel.

Many experiments have been carried out in the laboratory along similar lines to this -- namely, castration followed by the grafting of the gonads of the opposite sex. By such means various examples of 'feminized males' and 'masculinized females' have been produced. All these experiments, as well as those carried out spontaneously by Nature, show that the machinery that controls the development of sex characters is, in the words used by Mr H. G. Wells and his collaborators in *The Science of Life*, a double one, which may be likened to a switch mechanism. The chromosomes and their genes form the first switch. Set in a certain way, the animal travels along a certain road, so as to produce a reproductive organ that is male, set in another, to produce one that is female. At this point in the development is situated the second switch, which acts by turning on the male or female hormones respectively. It is this second switch that we have learned in our laboratories how to tamper with, so as to divert an animal into the opposite sex-track and produce by our tampering such anomalies as the feminized male and the masculinized female.

So far we have spoken only of the gonads (the testes in the male and the ovaries in the female) as imparting to the body, through their chemical messengers the hormones, the various changes characteristic of the male and the female. By their circulation into the blood-stream these internal secretions modify the physical conformation of the body and the psychological aptitudes of the growing child until, with the passage of years, that child becomes a fully developed man or woman. It must be realized, however, that the situation is in reality far more complicated than this. For the development of a man or woman the harmonious work of the hormones of not one but of many ductless glands is necessary, amongst others the pituitary, the thyroid, the thymus, and the suprarenals. Disfunction or failure in any one of these

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glands may result in disordered growth and the development of an abnormal individual. To the interpretation of the intricate relationship that exists between the various members of the endocrine circle much study is now being given. It has been found that the pituitary plays in this complicated partnership an extremely important role. The pituitary has, indeed, been termed by endocrinologists 'the leader of the endocrine orchestra', for not only does it apparently exert a controlling action on the activity of many of the other glands, but its presence is essential to the general growth of the body. If the anterior lobe of the pituitary is removed from an immature mouse, the growth of not only the sex-glands but of the whole body is arrested, so that an ill-shapen dwarf is the result. The pituitary, therefore, lying well concealed beneath the brain, may be said to be the very mainspring of endocrine control.

But the development of the sex characters is even more complicated than this. It has already been stated that for normal growth two things are necessary: first, the right impetus must be imparted to the body by the endocrine secretions; and second, the body must be capable of reacting to them. So far we have spoken only of the first of these requirements, and it is now necessary to say a few words concerning the second - namely, the ability of the body to respond to the appropriate endocrine stimulus. Fortunately this is a much less common cause of mal-development than is a disorder of secretion, but that the factor of body responsiveness is not only of theoretical but also of practical importance is shown by the following case-records. Recently, at a hospital at which the writer works, a patient who to all outward appearances was a healthy young woman of twenty-four was admitted for an operation for hernia. During the operation, to the surprise of the operating surgeon, two perfectly well-formed testicles were found in the hernial swelling. Further investigation revealed that although to outward appearance the patient seemed to be a normal woman,

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the vagina and uterus had remained rudimentary. Actually the patient was not a woman, but a man whose body had failed to respond to the internal secretions of his testes. As a result of this he had retained the neutral form that, as we have seen, approximates to that of the female rather than that of the male. Since not only physically but also psychologically the patient was more female than male, 'he' elected to go on living as a 'woman'.

Sometimes the confusion of sex is worse than in the case cited above. The writer was recently asked to give an opinion concerning the sex of a young person who had alternately tried living as a man and a woman. Each effort had failed, and had ended in his being accused of masquerading in clothes of the opposite sex. The confusion in this case was worse because some response of the tissues to male hormone had taken place, and at the same time many of the features of the female body had been retained. Outwardly the patient appeared more feminine than male, except for a growth of facial hair that necessitated his shaving twice weekly. This made it difficult for him to associate with women, and having long been on the books of a labour bureau as a female, he was at the time of the examination anxious to have his name transferred to the male side. Medical men had been disputing for fifteen years on the subject of his sex, and life had been rendered almost impossible for him, for whichever clothes he assumed, he was regarded by his fellows as a masquerader.

*Hermaphrodites and Gynanders.* – A hermaphrodite is an animal which is both male and female, the word being derived from the name of the mythological offspring of Hermes and Aphrodite. Animals of this mixed kind occur as natural phenomena on the lower invertebrate levels of the evolutionary scale, for example, amongst the worms. Although they are in possession of the reproductive organs of both sexes, they are not necessarily capable of fertilizing themselves owing to the fact that the organs may be so



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placed as to render this impossible. Even when self-fertilization is anatomically feasible hermaphrodites often show a preference for fertilization by some other individual, thereby gaining the advantage of a shuffling of genes. It may well be that these hermaphrodites represent a local retrograde movement in the general evolutionary advance.

As we ascend the evolutionary ladder complete hermaphroditism becomes rarer and rarer. We find approximations to the condition amongst toads and frogs, but even here the hermaphroditism is not necessarily permanent. For example, all male toads possess partially developed ovaries in the neighbourhood of their testicles and should the latter

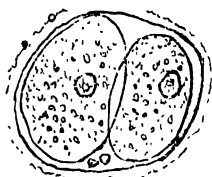


Fig. 2. Division of the zygote or fertilized ovum into two cells.

be excised, the ovaries become mature. The same is true of young male frogs. As these grow older their superfluous ovaries shrink and disappear. In mammals and in man true hermaphroditism – distinguished from pseudo-hermaphroditism by the possession of the reproductive glands of both sexes – is an extreme rarity. When it occurs it is usually the result of an accident occurring in the machinery of sex determination. The two kinds of accident which may account for it will be described.

The first happens in the earliest stages of the development of the new individual. We will suppose that the fertilized ovum possesses two X chromosomes and is therefore going to develop into a female. It starts by dividing in the usual manner in two cells (see Fig. 2) and then by a continuation

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of this process into an increasing number of cells. But something can go wrong at this early stage; for example, one of the two *X* chromosomes may get lost from one of the two original cells and therefore from all its descendants as well. Because these cells now possess only a single *X* chromosome they become male, whilst the other half of the embryo, which retains its proper equipment of two *X* chromosomes, continues to develop, in accordance with the original plan, into

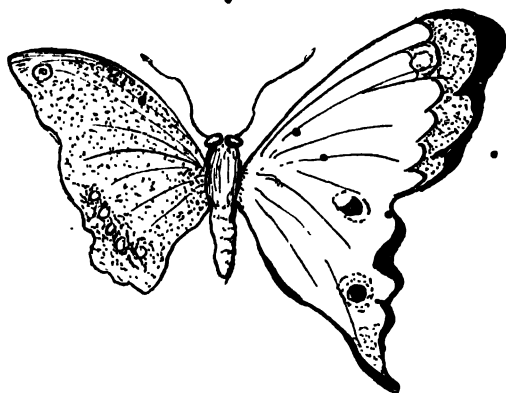


Fig. 3. A gynander butterfly the right half of which is female and the left half male.

a female. Such a monstrosity is known as a gynander, a term which has been derived from the two Greek words for woman and man. The most striking example of gynanders are to be found amongst the butterflies, the different patterns of the wings in the two sexes rendering the condition very conspicuous (see Fig. 3). In the museum of the late Lord Rothschild there was another very striking example of a gynander pheasant, the right half of the bird being decked out in all the splendour of the cock pheasant and the left half wearing the sombre plumage of the hen.

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The other varieties of intersex are less spectacular than the gynanders and it is probable that more than one kind of accident accounts for them. The one chosen for description will be the free-martin, or intersex calf, because the explanation of this condition is comparatively simple. Cows not infrequently give birth to twins and if the developing twins are of different sexes it may happen that the foetal membranes surrounding them becomes joined so that blood from the one

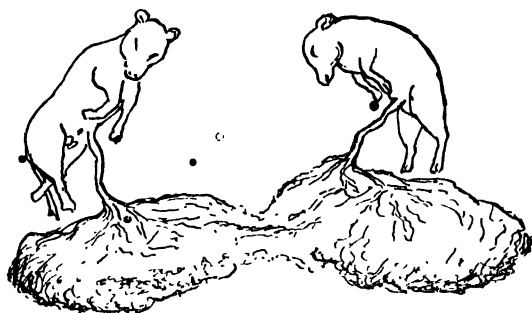


Fig. 4. Free-martin calves. The foetal membranes have become joined so that blood from the one circulates also through the other. Male hormones from the male calf push the female calf in a male direction.

circulates through the other. In such a case the male hormone from the male twin is carried also to the female twin and propels it in a masculine direction. The result is the birth of a calf which is neither a true heifer nor a true bull; in other words, a free-martin (see Fig. 4).

The main reason for describing these freaks of nature is that it provides the reader with a standpoint from which he can view sex in a different way from that in which he is accustomed to regard it. For a long time it was believed, not only by the ignorant but also by the instructed, that masculine and feminine were two antagonistic and pro-

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foundly differentiated entities. Man and woman were set widely apart in our minds, and the concept of the integrity of our own sex was maintained as an inviolable characteristic of personality. To cast any doubt on one's manhood or one's womanhood was regarded as an insult, especially to the male. Because of this attitude, all intersexual states, whether they affected the body or the mind, or both, were looked upon almost with horror. Departures from the normal might be tolerated in other functions but not in the function of sex.

As a result of our biological survey, we are in a position to see that this was an erroneous view of sex in need of correction. The two sexes, masculine and feminine, are not two well defined and separate entities standing widely apart. Rather must we regard them as two conditions that may approach each other and 'end by fusing in a phase of primitive ambiguity' (Marañón) In every male lurks a female, in every female a male, sometimes so arrogant as to mask the true personality, sometimes so shy as to be scarcely perceptible. No longer can we speak of the 'male type' and of the 'female type', but rather of a series of infinite gradations 'which extend from a flagrant hermaphroditism to forms so attenuated that they merge into normality itself' (Marañón).

This new attitude to sex helps us not only to understand such comparatively rare anomalies as hermaphroditism, but also to effect certain necessary changes in our view of psychological homosexuality and the manner in which it expresses itself. If none of us can pride ourselves on being a hundred per cent man or a hundred per cent woman, what right have we to stigmatize as monstrous those in whom confusion is revealed more clearly than in us? Full sexual differentiation is comparatively rare, and according to Biedl 'the pure man and the pure woman are extreme cases which are scarcely to be met with.' Even if we do not live in houses made of glass, but only in houses with many windows we should avoid throwing stones, for the sake of our own vulnerability. There,

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in the unfortunate intersexual individual whose method of expressing his urge disgusts us, could walk ourselves, but for the grace of a more satisfactory balance of hormones and a more fortunate upbringing. In the beginning we were all potential homosexuals, but fortunately the switch that put us on to the right road has worked effectively, so that we have become more fully differentiated males.

There is another lesson to be derived from this new conception of sex. We are inclined to be too sweeping in our generalizations concerning men and women – for example, that they have a different attitude to sexuality, or that they look upon marriage from different angles. Such generalizations, although they may be useful, are misleading if they are accepted too unreservedly. Whilst they may be true of the individuals who stand at the extremities of the scale of gradations – that is to say, of the womanly woman and of the masculine man – they apply less and less as we approach the masculine type of woman and the feminine type of man. When therefore, in the following chapter, certain distinctions are drawn between the psychic sexual characteristics of men and women, it must be remembered that these generalizations have only a limited application, and that there are many individuals of whom they are not true. All that we can assert, indeed, is that there exist certain tendencies that help to differentiate the man from the woman, and more particularly the manly man from the womanly woman.

### CHAPTER 3

## STUDY OF THE SEXUAL CHARACTERS

MUCH time has been devoted to the study of the distinctive characteristics of the two sexes and it will be of interest to note the more important of them. A complete review of sexual characteristics would involve such a detailed study of human anatomy, physiology, and psychology that it is clearly beyond the province of this book. 'It seems,' says Caullery, 'as though the organism was impregnated by sex which reveals itself more or less perceptibly in every one of its parts.' This being so, all that is possible is to indicate some of the more important characteristics of the two sexes.

John Hunter was the first to divide the sexual characters into primary and secondary. According to Hunter's classification the primary sex characters are the reproductive glands themselves as well as the accessory organs of those glands, together constituting the genital apparatus. By secondary characters Hunter meant those general extragenital differences which permit differentiation between male and female at sight. This method of classification, like so many others of the great anatomist, has stood the test of time, and most authors make use of it, although some prefer to confine the term primary to the reproductive glands, and to use the terms secondary and tertiary for the genital apparatus and the external differences in the sexes, respectively. Marañon has gone further, and subdivided sexual characters into anatomical and functional, in order that he may be able to include in his classification physiological and psychological distinctions as well as structural ones. As this method of classification possesses certain advantages, we shall make use of it here.

It is not proposed to enter into a detailed description of

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either the primary or the secondary characteristics of sex, but only to enumerate the more important of the latter.

Of all the secondary anatomical characteristics, the most profoundly significant is that which concerns the proportional size of the pelvic- and shoulder-girdles. The pelvis of a woman is, proportional to her shoulders, much wider than that of a man, the extra width being associated with the necessity of accommodating within it the gestating uterus. This increased width has the effect of making the hips converge sharply towards the knees, so as to make her, in comparison with the man, appear knock-kneed. This obliquity of the thigh-bones is the cause of her characteristic gait.

Another marked anatomical difference between the sexes lies in the development and distribution of the subcutaneous fat. This in a woman tends to accumulate behind the breasts, in the lower part of the abdomen, around the hips, and over the thighs. By subjecting herself to severe dieting and strenuous exercise, a modern woman sometimes succeeds in avoiding the fattening that is a normal product of maturity. She may even contrive to step from youth to senility without passing through maturity, but if she manages this, it is generally at a price: that of substituting for fat the disfigurement of the wrinkle.

Other external differences between the sexes exist in the character and distribution of the hair. The fineness and length of a woman's hair have long been recognized as amongst her most cherished possessions, and ever since poets began to sing of love they have dwelt on the tresses dark or fair, but always luxuriant, of the beloved. Another advantage that she possesses over the male is that with the passing years she rarely becomes bald. It must therefore be postulated that if baldness is a pathological accident, it is one that has a sexual significance.

A still more clearly marked distinction between the two sexes is the development of facial hair in the male. It should be remembered that this is not limited to the growth of the

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moustache and beard, but also of the eyebrows and hairs within the ears and nose.

The difference in the body hair of the two sexes is well known. Not only is the body hair more developed in the male, but the distribution of the pubic hair is different. In the adolescent male it terminates above, as in a woman, in a horizontal line, but in the post-puberal years the hair extends upwards towards the navel and downwards to the perineum. That this is a sexual character is shown not only by the feminoid distribution of pubic hair in the adolescent boy, but also by the masculinoid changes noted in many women as they approach the climacteric.

The only other anatomical distinction that it is necessary to mention is the difference in the size of the larynx, or Adam's apple, of a man and of a woman. This may be summed up in the assertion that the larynx of the woman remains in the hypoevolutionary condition, whilst that of the male after puberty attains complete development, with the deepening of the voice.

Of equal importance to the anatomical characteristics are the psychological differences between the sexes. Marañón has suggested that these, like the anatomical differences, should be subdivided into primary and secondary. By primary differences he would imply the character of the sexual urge, the nature of the orgasm, and the different attitude of a man and a woman to conception and fecundation. By secondary differences he means the maternal nature of the female as contrasted with the more aggressive attitude of the male, who, having been relieved of the burden of reproduction, is more concerned with the defence of the home. These differences are connected with the different roles played by the male and female in reproduction, the female preoccupied with the welfare and care of the young, the male with the possession of the female and the subsequent protection of his partner and offspring. They will be discussed at greater length in the following paragraphs.



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*The Primary Functional Characters and Fecundation.* – It is generally accepted that what we may term sexual hunger or the dynamic drive of one sex towards the other is stronger in the male than it is in the female. All the world over it is the male who seeks and fights for the possession of the female. To the female the male is a means to an end, for the male she is an end in herself. The male seeks for the female as a means of satisfying his sexual urge; the female submits to him because by doing so she will achieve her maternal aim. The instinctive drive of the male towards the female is therefore more blind and compelling than that of the female towards the male. Not only in the animal, but also in the human world it is the male who searches for the female, just as in the cellular origins of multicellular life it is the spermatozoon that seeks for the ovum.

The fact that in human society there are to be found many wives who are more highly sexed than their husbands does not affect this general principle that the sexual drive of the male is more compulsive than that of the female. It has already been pointed out that the force of passion varies greatly in different men and women. And it may well happen that a highly sexed woman finds herself married to a weakly sexed husband. Moreover, human beings, with their highly organized nervous systems and their specialized intellectual development, are subject to mental inhibitions from which the animal world is free. It is possible, therefore, that the husband who is sexually overmatched by his wife is suffering from an inhibition rather than from an inherent weakness of his desire.

The second difference between the sexual hunger of the male and that of the female has already been mentioned. To the male sexual union is an end in itself, but to the female only a means. Maternity is the key to the understanding of a woman's psychology as well as to her anatomy. 'She experiences an inclination towards sexual life only to utilize the man as a detour towards a maternal end' (Marañón). Deep

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in every woman lies the desire to possess a child, and so fundamental and all-compelling is the maternal instinct that it colours all her life. It is because of the existence of this deep-seated urge that a liaison from which child-birth is excluded can for a woman rarely be a true substitute for marriage. Sex for sex's sake may satisfy the man, it is unlikely long to satisfy the woman. Intercourse for her is the outward expression of her feelings for a particular man, and that man is the one she has selected to be the father of her child. The enjoyment of what may be termed undiluted sexuality may be regarded as the prerogative of the male.

Because the sexual urge in a woman is less violent than that of the male, it admits more readily of canalization in another direction. Thanks to this, an enforced chastity usually imposes less hardship on her than it does on a man. She can more readily find an outlet for her sexuality in such activities as philanthropy, social enterprises, and adoptive maternity. Another indication of this less violent and differentiated character of the sexual urge in a woman is the great readiness with which she can enter into an ardent friendship with another woman, a friendship that is sometimes coloured with a strong homosexual tint, even although no physical intimacies are indulged in. Such a friendship is often a method of finding expression for a sexual urge that cannot, through circumstance, find its natural outlet.

Having dealt with the primary sexual urge, it is now necessary to discuss differences in the character of the orgasm or sexual climax of a man and of a woman. As the physical pleasure resulting from having eaten or drunk is the sequel to the physical urge of hunger or thirst, so is the orgasm the means by which the sexual hunger is satisfied. It will be pointed out later that 'tumescence', or the engorgement of the erectile tissues of the body with blood, is the physical accompaniment of a hunger for sexuality, and that 'detumescence', or the emptying of the erectile tissues, is the accompaniment of the orgasm. Looked at from this point of

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view, sexual hunger and satisfaction run parallel with tumescence and detumescence.

The chief difference to be noted between the orgasm of a man and that of a woman is in the time of its appearance. In the case of a man the orgasm is bound up with the act of ejaculation, and is comparatively rapid, occurring within a few minutes of the beginning of active coitus. With the woman, on the other hand, the orgasm is linked up with less well understood genital phenomena and is apt to be tardy in appearance. So belated, indeed, is the orgasm in many cases, that it may only have been experienced once or twice during the whole of a woman's married life. Some women have come to regard the orgasm as a luxury that has never been offered them, owing to the fact that their husbands have finished long before their own time for obtaining it has been reached. And from the point of view of function, it may be said that they are right: an orgasm is for them a luxury. Whereas for the satisfactory discharge of the male function of fertilization an ejaculation, and therefore an orgasm, is indispensable, for the female function of conception an orgasm is unnecessary. There are, indeed, many women, mothers of large families, who have never, during the whole of their long married life, experienced an orgasm. Some of these have undoubtedly been regarded as 'frigid' by their husbands, but their 'frigidity' is due solely to the fact that coitus has never continued long enough to secure for them complete sexual satisfaction. This difference in the latent period of the orgasm in the two sexes is the cause of many difficulties on the physical plane of marriage. Fortunately the trouble admits of remedy provided the husband is prepared to learn to be a better lover and to supplement instinct by art.

*Secondary Functional Characters.* — Whether all that Marañón includes under his term of secondary functional characters should be regarded as sexual is debatable, but since they are linked up with the essential roles played by

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the male and female in reproduction, there is some justification for including these psychological traits in a classification of sexual characteristics. Not only in her physical but also in her psychological make-up everything in a woman is sacrificed to the function of motherhood. In the same way a man is psychologically, as well as physically, specially equipped for the task of seeking out the woman and protecting her and his family.

When studying the development of the physical characteristics of sex, it was said that the neutral form of the mammal approximated to that of the female. The female body may therefore be regarded as a body that has undergone no further development through the stimulating action of the male hormone. Biologically, therefore, a woman may be regarded as 'an organism arrested so far as her general evolution is concerned in the borderland of adolescence by the necessity of specializing a large part of her activity to the transcendental function of maternity' (Marañón). For this reason her aptitude for physical and intellectual exertion in the primitive struggle for existence is less than that of a man. Occasionally she may possess these more masculine faculties, and by her own exertions succeed in establishing for herself a place in the world, but this is not her natural role. Biologically speaking, the woman who fights her own battles has moved out of the sphere for which Nature has equipped her and trespassed into another that does not by right belong to her. The fact that she often succeeds in making good in the new sphere into which she has wandered does not affect this principle. Emotionally and physically she is dedicated to the career of maternity, and it is on the man that she was meant to rely not only for her own support, but also for that of her children.

In order that she may succeed in the world to which she rightly belongs, woman has been equipped with a greater sensitiveness to affective stimulus than has a man. She sees life through her feelings, and emotionally reaches many a

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truth to which a man, working laboriously through the medium of his reason, remains permanently blind. The fact that in the sphere of intellectual abstraction she is at a disadvantage is no sign of inferiority, for it is no exaggeration to say that a man's judgement is as often warped as it is helped by his intellect. 'A woman's judge,' it has been said, 'would always deliver her sentences in accordance with the dictates of her heart.' But, as Marañon has asked, 'what better method could there be of judging the action of others than reason tempered by feeling?' It is therefore no deprecation of a woman to state that she is more sensitive in her emotions and less ruled by her intellect. We are merely stating a difference, a difference which equips her for the special part for which she was cast.

All discussions on the subject of which is superior, a man or a woman, are senseless and void. There is neither superior nor inferior, only a difference. The rivalry of the sexes is based on an error, for men and women rule in separate and complementary spheres. This truth has been well summarized by two writers. 'If God had meant woman to rule over man, he would have taken her out of Adam's head. Had he destined her to be his slave – from his feet. But God took the woman out of the man's side, for he made her to be an help-mate and an equal to him' (St Augustine). 'In marriage alone is the woman completed and fulfilled by the man, and he through her. Man and woman together compose the fullness of humanity' (Hippel).

*The possibility that the so-called psychological sex characteristics may be socially conditioned.* – In the foregoing account of the psychological characteristics of men and women it has been assumed that they are sex-linked; the male child is born with certain inherited tendencies which lead to his developing into the typical aggressive man; the female child inherits another set of tendencies which produce in time the maternally-minded woman. But it may well be that social conditioning plays a much greater part in deter-

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mining the respective characteristics of men and women than we have imagined. Margaret Mead has supplied strong evidence in favour of this different view of sex characteristics by her study of three different tribes in New Guinea, the gentle, mountain-dwelling Arapesh, the fierce cannibalistic Mundugumor, and the graceful head-hunters of Tchambuli. As a result of two years spent in their midst she has come to the conclusion that the behaviour we believe to be determined by sex is actually determined by the prevalent culture and that the most significant human differences are those that occur between different individuals and not those that occur between the two sexes.

The three tribes she studied lived in different localities and possessed markedly different tribal ideals and standards. The Arapesh, both men and women, displayed a temperament which could be described as 'maternal in its parental aspects, and feminine in its sexual aspects'. The men had been trained to be 'cooperative, unaggressive, responsive to the needs and demands of others'. There was nothing to suggest that sexuality was a powerful driving force either for men or women amongst the Arapesh. In marked contrast to this both the men and the women of the Mundugumor tribe were 'ruthless, aggressive, positively-sexed individuals, with the maternal, cherishing aspects of personality at a minimum'. In neither the Arapesh nor the Mundugumor was there any marked contrast between the sexes. Arapesh men and women both subscribed to the local, mild, responsive ideal; Mundugumor men and women were equally aggressive and violent. In the third tribe, the Tchambuli, the respective sex attitudes were the reverse of those found in our own Western culture. The Tchambuli women were the dominant, impersonal, and managing partners, whilst the men were less responsive and the more emotionally dependent. The Tchambuli men appeared to live entirely for the sake of art and every man was skilled in dancing, carving, plaiting, painting, music, and the making of highly decorated masks.

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The women confined their artistic work to a little occasional painting and plaiting and they formed instead the solid group upon which the men depended for food, material support, and affection. Although the tribe was patrilineal in organization it was the Tchambuli women and not the Tchambuli men who possessed material power. They controlled the fishing, made and sold mosquito bags and traded in sago, taro, and arica nut. By doing all this they made it possible for their artist husbands to devote themselves to their recreative work.

Margaret Mead concludes from these very valuable observations of hers that 'the temperamental attitudes which we have traditionally regarded as feminine – such as passivity, responsiveness, and a willingness to cherish children – can easily be set up as the masculine pattern in one tribe, and in another be outlawed for the majority of women as well as for the majority of men.' If Margaret Mead is right in saying this, we are not justified in regarding the characteristic behaviour of men and women as sex-linked but should look upon them instead as being socially conditioned.

The truth probably lies between the two theories, inheritance and nurture both playing a part in their distribution. The pendulum tends now to swing too far in the direction of minimizing the genetically determined psychological differences between the sexes. The idea of the 'eternal feminine' cannot be dismissed as a myth, even though some of us may have made too much of it in the past. This subject is discussed more fully in another Pelican, *Sex and Society* by Kenneth Walker and Peter Fletcher.

## CHAPTER 4

# THE NATURE OF SEXUAL LOVE AND OF THE ACT OF UNION

HAVING dealt with the development of the sexual organs, we can now pass to the consideration of the activities for which it is a preparation. What is sexual love and what is the nature of sexual union? These are questions for which some sort of answers must be found, however inadequate they be.

The poets, psychologists, and biologists have all looked at the love of a man for a woman and of a woman for a man from their own respective standpoints and have given their individual accounts of it, and all of these descriptions contribute to our understanding of it. In this book we are concerned mainly with the biologist's view of sexual love, and he looks upon it as Nature's trick for bringing together the two sexes and thereby achieving her aim of continuation of the species. In other words, the biologist binds sexuality firmly to the function of reproduction and it is true that these two things are so closely interwoven in the animal world that to attempt to separate them is artificial. But it is otherwise in the world of man where separate treatment of sexuality and reproduction is amply justified. Crew has gone so far as to say that it is as legitimate to look upon man's sexuality as a means for his emotional and spiritual development as it is to regard it as an instrument for the perpetuation of the race. Modern man has found the means of completely separating the two functions of sexuality and reproduction and has made it no longer necessary, as formerly, to regard the one as necessarily a preliminary to the other. And who, apart from members of certain austere religious sects, would deny that this act of separation has led to an enrichment of man's life and to his spiritual gain?

Many different components are to be found in the tangle



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of emotions which is responsible for our sexual behaviour and I am indebted to H. G. Wells for the following analysis of them. Mr Wells told me privately that he had expended a great deal of thought in the writing of *The Anatomy of Frustration* (1936) and it is evident that his main character, Steele, reflects his own views on sexual love. Steele, he writes, was of the opinion that there were six main motives at work in sexual love and he formulated them as follows: 'the recurrent craving for sexual completion'; 'the lingering dependence of childhood'; and need, even in adulthood, to be fathered or mothered; 'the craving for a dependent', who is capable of satisfying our desire to exercise power; 'the craving for sympathy and imaginative response'; 'the practical need for a loyal ally in all sorts of matters', and for what Wells calls 'partnership without bookkeeping'. 'And ruling over all this tangle of motives, is the strong irrational disposition, strengthened by tradition and usage, to concentrate the fulfilment of all needs in one single "possessed" person of the opposite sex, which is "my man" or "my woman".' In the writer's opinion no more masterly analysis of the various ingredients of sexual love could have been given than this of Steele's who, if he can be identified with his creator, was by no means deficient in personal experience of the subject about which he was writing.

Science does not attempt to explain sexual love or to describe its various ingredients. It deals only with the physical accompaniments of sexual love and uses the same method of studying it that it employs in investigating other psychical phenomena, such as the emotion of fear. A man meets a lion on his path, and as the result of the visual and auditory impressions reaching his brain, certain physical changes take place in his body: his pupils dilate, his skin becomes blanched, he breaks out in a sweat, his mouth feels dry, his heart beats faster. In some such way as this a scientist would describe the emotion of fear, and in a similar manner he sets out to describe the phenomena associated with sexual

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Following the reception of a number of visual, auditory, olfactory, and tactile impressions from a woman, a man is filled with sexual desire, and at the same time certain changes take place in his body. Then follow a number of activities that culminate in physical union. Does this explain to us the nature of love? Certainly not. It merely describes a sequence of physiological events associated with that emotion.

Moll was the first scientist to put forward a theory of the constitution of the sexual impulse, and, incomplete although it may be, it is Moll's method of analysis that we propose to adopt here. He started by subdividing the sexual impulse into two component parts: one a local change, which in the male ends in the expulsion of semen, and the other a more general state, manifesting itself as a desire for physical and psychic contact with the partner. Both of these components of sexuality are supplementary to each other, and both are necessary in order that sexual congress may take place.

We shall begin by examining the local genital manifestation. To this first component of the sexual impulse Moll gives the name of the 'impulse of detumescence'. By detumescence is meant an emptying and shrinkage of the erectile tissues of the body. Erectile tissues are sponge-like tissues, full of spaces that are sometimes empty and sometimes engorged with blood. They enter largely into the construction of the external genitalia, and the chief example of an organ mainly composed of erectile tissue is the male organ of sex – the penis. After ejaculation has taken place the penis loses its rigidity and shrinks to its normal size – in other words, undergoes 'detumescence'. But before this can occur the preliminary stage of tumescence must have been brought about. This is achieved by the filling of the erectile tissues with blood. In domesticated animals and in civilized man tumescence is usually an easy process, but amongst wild animals living in a natural state it occurs less rapidly. Much preliminary activity and display on the part of the male and long

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consideration on the part of the female may be necessary before the erectile tissues respond to the erotic stimuli.

This process through which tumescence is secured is known as courtship, and courtship is a very necessary preliminary to sexual union. It must not be supposed that tumescence is in any way an activity confined to the male. Erectile tissue also enters into the structure of the female external genital organs, and preparation of the female for the subsequent phenomenon of detumescence is as necessary to her as it is to her partner. The only difference between tumescence and detumescence in the male and in the female is that whereas in the male the climax of detumescence is marked by the easily recognizable phenomenon of the expulsion of the semen, its physical concomitants in the female are less clearly understood. Yet, reduced to its essentials, physical love is the same in both cases: a preparatory phase of tumescence, followed at the climax of the act by detumescence. Detumescence is an anatomic-physiological process, but one that touches psychology at every point. In Havelock Ellis's words, 'Tumescence is the piling on of the fuel, detumescence is the leaping out of the devouring flame whence is lighted the torch of life, to be handed on from generation to generation. In tumescence the organism is slowly wound up and force is accumulated; in the act of detumescence the accumulated force is let go, and by its liberation the sperm-bearing instrument is driven home.'

To the second general component of the sexual impulse – namely, the desire of each partner for physical and psychic contact with the other – Moll gives the name of the 'impulse of contractation'. Contractation has as its goal the heightening of tumescence. But how does it arise? To this question neither Moll nor any other scientist can give an answer. The substitution of the awkward word contractation for the familiar word love brings us no nearer to an understanding of why two people of opposite sex should seek physical and psychic contact. We have merely found a new and inelegant

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cloak for our ignorance. It is better to confess at once that it is to the poet and the artist that we must turn if we want to find an answer to our question. 'What is love?' Professor F. A. E. Crew, one of our most eminent authorities on sex, writes as follows: 'One leaves the subject with a feeling of regret that biologist and layman cannot be content to leave the nature of sex unexplained, and to accept some simple view as that of Plato, who held that in the beginning man and woman were one, but that they were divided by the wrath of the gods into two, who for ever tend to come together and unite again. Such a view at least expresses the fundamental character of sexuality.'

If we can get no further in our attempt to discover the nature of love, we can at any rate study the phenomena of 'tumescence' and 'detumescence', and draw from our observations certain conclusions. This is what we propose to do, first dealing with the preliminary phase of 'tumescence' under the heading of courtship, and then with 'detumescence' under that of sexual union.

Courtship does not necessarily involve a struggle between rivals for a mate. It should be regarded rather as the prelude to sexual union, a preparatory phase that is just as necessary when rivalry is excluded as when it is present. By means of courtship tumescence, the essential step to detumescence is secured – desire heightened before it is released. For this reason every fresh act of union must be preceded by a courtship, even although it be an abbreviated one.

Tumescence is provoked by the stimulating action of the impressions received through all the special senses – touch, smell, hearing, vision, and even taste. The part played in courtship by each of the senses will be considered separately.

*The Tactile Sense.* – Of all the special senses that come into action in courtship, touch is the most primitive and at the same time the most important. Touch must, indeed, be regarded as the oldest of all forms of sensibility, the ancestor from which all other senses have descended. Touch therefore

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provides the most direct approach to sexual activity, and is the special sense which plays the biggest part in *courtship*. When we descend to such lowly creatures as insects, spiders, crabs, and crayfish, tactile sensation would appear to be the only sense involved in their mating. But even in the higher levels of the animal world touch plays a special role in courtship. Newman, who watched elephants love-making, observed that the male first fondled the female with his trunk, and then the pair, standing side by side, crossed trunks and put the tips into each other's mouths.

Caresses enter as largely into the love-making of human beings as of animals, and it might almost be said that the desire to be hugged, kissed, and embraced is innate in women. Sadger has pointed out that the sexual awakening of girls at puberty shows itself in a desire for kisses and caresses, even although at that time the tactile stimulation of erogenous zones have for these adolescents no sexual significance. He remarks that 'the halo of chastity that surrounds so many young girls rests on the absence of the genital impulse, combined with strong eroticism in the skin, the mucous membranes, and the muscular system'.

Whilst the whole of the body may be the starting-point of tactile impressions that have an exciting action on sexuality, there are certain regions the stimulation of which produces a specially strong reaction. These regions are termed 'erogenous zones'. They are generally located where skin merges into mucous membrane, and where tactile sensibility has become highly refined. As an example of an erogenous area may be quoted the lips. Kisses provide a fitting prelude to love, and all the great Eastern works on the subject devote much attention to the art of kissing. In the lover's kiss the tongue often plays a part, so that other special senses contribute their quota to it; taste and smell are added to tactile sensation. In this connexion it will be remembered that it was said of the kisses of Poppaea that they had about them the flavour of wild berries. It is, however, amongst the Mon-

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golian races that the olfactory component of the kiss enters so largely into courtship. In the kiss of Europeans touch predominates over smell.

The kiss is far from being an exclusively human method of arousing sexual excitement. Something analogous to kissing is found in the palpitating of antennae witnessed amongst snails and insects, the caressing of beaks seen amongst birds, the nuzzling of noses and mouths in the mammals, the licking and playful bites of domestic animals, and a hundred other different methods of using the mouth and the tongue to be observed in the courtship of animals. It might almost be said that in these examples of different methods of using the mouth is to be found a replica of every form of human love-making, from the lightest of butterfly kisses to the bite of the passionate lover.

Another highly erogenous area the stimulation of which sets up a powerful current of erotic stimulation is the breasts. It is, of course, obvious that the female breasts and genital organs are very closely connected. Not only do the changes produced in the womb by pregnancy react on the breasts, but suction of the nipple produces strong reflex contractions in the womb. It would seem that Nature had considered it advisable to offer some compensation for the tedium of suckling by giving to breast stimulation a certain pleasurable quality. Moreover, the breasts, like the genitalia, contain a certain amount of erectile tissue, the engorgement of which is the prelude to detumescence. There are many physiological reasons, therefore, for believing that the breasts play an important role in courtship. If it were necessary to support this assertion by evidence other than physiological, it would only be necessary to point to the amount of attention that has been directed to a woman's breasts by Catholic theologians. Havelock Ellis narrates that in the eighteenth century this subject became of such importance that a great controversy arose concerning the sin of handling a woman's breasts.

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Whilst stimulation of the lips and of the breasts is generally regarded as a normal and legitimate part of courtship, the stimulation of other areas is often stigmatized as a perversion. This idea, when we trace it back to its origin, is the result of the attitude adopted by so many people that love-making should conform to a certain standard model. But what exactly is this standard model, and by whom has it been designed? We are inclined to agree with Havelock Ellis that in love-making the distinction should be between what is aesthetic and what is inaesthetic, rather than between what appears to be ethically right or ethically wrong. What is right or wrong may safely be left to the lovers, for love creates for itself a new set of aesthetic values, and to the man or woman in love many things become beautiful that may seem inaesthetic to him who is not in love. Judged from the point of view of an outsider, the whole of love-making might even be regarded as indecorous. It is, therefore, only the lovers that can decide what for them is aesthetic and pleasing and what for them appears inaesthetic and displeasing. Love consults no outside authority, but frames its own rules according to its own lights and for its own purposes. This does not mean that there are not methods of love-making that may be regarded as harmful, methods that defeat the end to which the initial caresses act as a prelude. If, for example, tactile stimulation be used habitually not only for the purpose of initiating tumescence but also for securing detumescence, the normal functioning of the sexual reflexes may be jeopardized. For this reason the practices that are known in American circles as 'petting and necking' – in other words, intimacies that stop just short of complete sexual union – must be regarded as unsatisfactory, not because they necessarily infringe some moral code, but because, if practised too frequently, they are liable to make difficult the normal completion of the sexual act.

Ticklishness, which may be looked upon as a by-product of tactile sensation, has always been a subject of interest to

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sexologists. Although it is certainly non-sexual in its origin, and probably served the useful purpose of assisting an animal to rid a vulnerable area of some local irritant, the tickling of an erogenous area results in tumescence. Amongst some races to tickle is, indeed, tantamount to making love, and in the Fuegian language the same word is applied to both actions. Amongst European nations, however, tickling plays only a small part in courtship. It is nevertheless interesting to note that in the eighteenth century that amorous Tsarina Catherine retained at Court official foot-ticklers, whose duty it was to tickle the soles of her feet and at the same time to recite wanton stories or sing obscene songs. Sterne records that these privileged courtiers, selected from the ranks of ladies of high birth, also performed the special duty of smacking the Imperial buttocks when the Tsarina fell exhausted by her sexual excesses.

*Smell.* – Amongst vertebrates the sense of smell is so developed that it may be said to occupy a unique position amongst the special senses, second only in importance to touch. In the brain of many animals the olfactory lobes – that is to say, the parts of the brain concerned with the perception of odours – are more highly developed than the cerebral hemispheres, or those portions of the brain that have become pre-eminent in man. It is obvious that such animals must interpret the world around them largely in terms of smell, and one has only to watch the dog on a walk with his master to realize how different must be the pictures of the universe that are being formed in the canine and in the human brains. It is not surprising, therefore, that amongst animals with a high olfactory development smelling enters very largely into their courtship.

In man, and also in the higher apes, smell has sunk to a secondary place amongst the senses. It is, however, a useful auxiliary sense, and one that retains certain strong emotional connexions. A smell will bring back to the mind the memory of a scene that previously was forgotten, and not only the



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scene but also the emotions that were experienced at that time. Suddenly, and without any effort, all the old associations connected with that particular odour return – a garden in which one had long ago walked, the companion of one's side, what was said, and how one felt. Smell is the least understood and the most difficult to investigate of all the special senses.

The emotional quality of smell gives to it a more important place than it would otherwise occupy amongst the special senses that play a part in courtship. Instinctively women have realized this, and have long used special scents as a means of enhancing their charms. But although the use of perfumes by a woman has a sexual significance, it is not entirely for sexual purposes that she employs them. Women as a rule are more sensitive to odours than are men, and it is for her own pleasure as much as for that of her mate that she uses the products of the scent-maker. Alice Thayer has shown by her observations on American girls that they are considerably more influenced by odour than are boys. Her experiments also suggest that smell sensibility increases in girls after puberty.

*Hearing.* – It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of the part played by speech in the evolution of human thought, and speech without the capacity to hear would be useless. It is the possession of this power to exchange ideas that distinguishes man from the rest of the animal world.

The Swedish philosopher Sperber suggests that if we could trace back speech to its beginnings we should find that it originated in two primitive utterances: the cry of a hungry offspring for its mother, and the call of an excited male for his mate. Whether this be true or not, it is at any rate obvious that courtship has close associations with the special sense of hearing. It is only during the breeding season that many males use their vocal powers to the fullest. This is particularly noticeable amongst birds, into whose mating singing so largely enters. Some naturalists, like Hudson, give

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another interpretation to the singing of birds, and state that a bird sings not so much in order to attract a mate, but in order to find vent to a surplus of energy. It sings, therefore, for the same reason that some men sing in the bathroom after a cold sponge. This theory, however, does not explain the exuberance of song which marks the mating season, and it is impossible to escape the conviction that the singing of male birds is connected with the presence of the females.

The fact that it is the male who is vocal during the breeding season would suggest that it is the female who is more particularly responsive to sound. This idea can be supported by another argument. A change in the quality of the voice at puberty is an exclusively male secondary sex characteristic; the female voice does not change. Whilst therefore the adult male voice has for the female a marked sexual significance, that of the adult female has less meaning for the male.

From song it is but a little distance to music, and music, of all the arts, makes the greatest appeal to the emotions. It is not without significance that a passion for music is suddenly developed by many girls about the period of puberty, a passion that may last only a few years or remain with them for the rest of their lives. To stress, however, the close connexion between music and love is unnecessary. That music is the food of love was realized by the troubadours, the poets, and the lyric-writers long before scientists set out on the journey to discover the connexion between hearing and tumescence.

*Vision.* — A consideration of the part played by vision in courtship inevitably leads to the riddle of aesthetics. Are our ideals of sexual beauty influenced by some fundamental law of aesthetics, or should we put the question the other way round and ask whether our conception of what is beautiful is based on sexual feeling? It is impossible, and fortunately unnecessary, to attempt to find an answer to this enigma. The sexual and non-sexual factors in our appreciation of beauty are so closely interwoven that it would be ridiculous

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to try to disentangle them. Moreover, all attempts to analyse beauty are from the very beginning foredoomed to failure. In making them we are trying to state in terms of the intellect that which is mainly the concern of the emotions. We will therefore keep clear of the question 'What is beauty?' and confine our attention to feminine beauty.

What can be stated with assurance is that although there are certain features common to all ideals of feminine beauty, individual taste and fashion enter largely into the conception of the beautiful. Every man, within certain limits, builds up for himself his ideal woman; every woman, within similar limits, builds up for herself her ideal man. But it is certain that, like other personal ideals, these individual conceptions of what is beautiful are influenced by fashion; for example, modern times have witnessed a reaction in this country against the exuberant womanly ideal portrayed by Rubens and a partiality for the immature boyish type of womanhood. Our personal ideals are therefore markedly influenced by extraneous forces; time and geography enter into our sexual aesthetics. The steatopygia of the Hottentot girl finds no favour in Mayfair, and the fat beauty of the Mohammedan harem is at a discount in Balham. Our conception of what is beautiful is, indeed, determined to some extent by the character of our racial type. To the average man or woman of every race the woman or man who most completely represents their own racial type usually appears the most attractive. It is difficult to be sexually moved by persons who are fundamentally unlike us, and much easier to see beauty in racial characteristics that we have been taught to admire. Usually we go to the trouble of accentuating those features by means of art. Eastern women, who by nature possess large and lustrous eyes, take pains to accentuate them by means of pigment. The hairy Ainu are the hairiest of all races, and amongst the Ainu she who has most hair is considered the most desirable.

Although it is the male that is more likely to be highly decorated amongst the lower animals, beauty is primarily a

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quality of woman. It is through her beauty that a woman usually acquires her mate, but through some other quality that a man succeeds in attracting a woman. The man notable for his success with women is not, as a rule, a man who comes nearest to the current standard of male beauty. But the most admired of women is generally she who possesses the greatest beauty. Loveliness is the bait by means of which woman first attracts the attention of the male; strength, either physical or mental, is the quality that draws the woman towards the man.

In considering the part played by vision in courtship we have to consider not only static but also dynamic beauty. Beautiful movements make a strong erotic appeal, and amongst savage races dancing is often an important means of sexual selection. It is well known also that a dance is the preliminary to sexual union amongst such birds as the Greater Grebes, and if we interpret the word dancing as meaning rhythmic movements, it can be said that these play an important part in the courtship of most animals.

So far we have assumed that the sexual behaviour of the male is a reaction provoked only by the presence of the female. As a result of the stimulation of the olfactory, visual, auditory, and tactile nerves, a sexual response is excited. This is not actually the case. It has been proved that 'tumescence' may be brought about in the absence of any stimulation of the special senses. By means of mutilating experiments, Stone showed that all the major senses of a male rat – hearing, sight, taste, smell, and superficial touch – could be eliminated and yet the rat was able to mate when a female was brought into his cage. The experiment was also made of isolating new-born male rats so that they had no chance of seeing or smelling a female. Yet when they arrived at maturity these rats mated as readily as any other rat. It is obvious therefore that none of the sexual incentives emanating from the female are essential to a mating response on the part of the male.

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The urge to mate should be regarded rather as something that is innate in the male, and the presence of the female as the condition under which this fundamental urge becomes fully manifest. Another way of putting it would be to state that the female is not necessary to the charging of the male with sex energy, but is conducive to the discharging of his sex energy. This dynamic view of sexual behaviour is now tending to replace the older view that it is a reflex mechanism in which the female plays the role of the stimulus. At the same time it must be remembered that although the female is not essential to the charging up of the male with sex energy, her presence undoubtedly enhances the intensity of the sex drive. She is not merely a channel through which energy is released, but also a means through which energy is accumulated.

*Sexual Union.* – The end result of the sex drive – the act of coitus or copulation – is an exceedingly complex activity, and one which varies greatly in different animals. Although many reflex mechanisms take part in it, coitus cannot be regarded merely as a chain of involuntary reflexes. Conscious control of the sex act is possible to a much higher degree than is usually believed. By the exercise of the will the sequence of events that constitutes coitus can be interrupted, abridged, or prolonged, according to desire. But such control needs cultivation and practice, and in the majority of European countries the art of coitus receives little attention. It is only in some of the Southern European countries and in the East that 'love' is treated as an art. In such countries the man who exercises no control over his ejaculatory mechanism is considered sexually sub-normal.

As has already been stated, detumescence is the final phase of coitus, and is associated in the male with the act of ejaculation. Whilst it is justifiable to call the genital component of the sexual drive the urge to detumescence, ejaculation so overshadows detumescence that it would be equally appropriate to term it 'the urge to ejaculate'.

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Ejaculation or detumescence in the male is accompanied by violent muscular contractions. It is supposed by many authorities that orgasm in the woman is associated with similar contractions of the womb. This is very probably the case, but, generally speaking, the objective phenomena associated with the orgasm in the female are much less precise than those which mark the climax of the sex act in the male. The subjective nervous manifestations, the relief of tension, and the feeling of repose are, on the other hand, often more marked in the woman than they are in the man. Detumescence in both sexes is followed by a period of repose and recovery, by a feeling of lassitude and at the same time of heightened well-being.

Sexual activity, like sexual development, is dependent on the activity of the sex glands. When rats are castrated in infancy their subsequent behaviour is sexless. So also is the behaviour of men who have been castrated before puberty. The presence of the male hormone is as necessary to sexual activity as it is to sexual development.

But the internal secretion of the testes is not the only hormone required for the stimulation of sexual behaviour. If a mature rat is castrated, sex behaviour may persist for several months; but if the pituitary gland be removed, all sexual activity immediately ceases. It seems therefore that the pituitary secretes an 'erogenic' (love-producing) hormone, which is even more essential to sexuality than is testicular hormone.

*Rhythm in Sexual Activity.* – As has been seen, sexuality and reproduction in the animal world are so closely linked that it is impossible to separate them. Because reproduction is a periodic function which occurs only during the rutting season sexuality also becomes a rhythmic function. When reproduction is in abeyance the sex glands shrink to a small fraction of their size during the mating season and with this shrinkage there occurs a disappearance of sexual desire. In many mammals the testicles actually ascend at this time into

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the abdomen, the original site of their development. With the coming of the mating season they descend again, recovering their bulk as they do so. The ovaries of the female also become quiescent during the off-season, but with only a slight loss of size.

The mechanism which regulates these cycles is still obscure but light would seem to play some part in it. The majority of animals breed in the spring and if, during the winter months, they are illuminated by artificial light after the sun has set, they can be forced into the breeding state earlier than they would otherwise have reached it. Light may well be a factor therefore but it is unlikely that it is the only external stimulus responsible for evoking activity, since similar cycles occur in animals living principally in the dark.

The function of these 'sexual cycles' is to ensure that sperms are present in the female genital passages at the time that ovulation, or liberation of the egg-cells, takes place. This time is known as the oestrus when the female comes 'on heat' and shows a disposition to mate. It synchronizes with a building-up process in the womb in preparation for conception. If fertilization has occurred the egg buries itself in the thickened lining of the womb and subsequently develops into the embryo, but if fertilization has not taken place, the ovum is lost and the uterus regresses. Then a new cycle begins all over again. The chemical mechanism underlying these cycles has now been revealed by the patient work of the endocrinologists. The cycles are controlled by the female hormones and more especially by the hormones of the ovary and of that master-gland, the pituitary. The female submits to the male only when she comes 'on heat', in other words, only when the preparation of the womb has been completed and the egg-cells are ready for fertilization. In many animals the timing of the sexual act is even more accurately determined by the fact that the stimulation of the ovary brought about by courtship and love-play provokes the liberation of the ovum. This ingenious device reduces

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still further the likelihood that the egg-cells will be discharged without spermatozoa being available for their fertilization.

*Rhythm in the Sub-Human Primates.* – Apes and monkeys also show a clear-cut rise and fall of sexual desire similar to that found in the lower animals but the cycles are no longer seasonal. The female ape is receptive of the male much more often than is the female of the lower animals but still only when ovulation is imminent and coitus is likely to be followed by her conceiving. It is noticeable also that the rhythm of desire in the apes is not nearly so rigidly determined by hormones as it is in the case of the lower animals. Female apes show a disposition to accept males even when there exists no possibility of their conceiving and because the anthropoid apes are man's nearest relations in the animal world, this is of great interest to us. It is amongst the anthropoid apes that we first see the early beginnings of some sort of social control over the purely automatic sexual responses of the animal. What is also of interest to us is that this weakening of hormonal control is greater in the more highly-evolved apes than in the monkeys. Both the male and female chimpanzee show a marked preference for certain partners and a female chimpanzee often repulses the advances of a male whom she does not happen to fancy, even although everything else is propitious for fertilization and conception. A new factor is clearly beginning to intrude here and to interfere with the efficiency of the chemically determined sexual rhythm, namely, the factor of a more highly evolved central nervous system and larger cerebral hemispheres.

*The Rhythm of Desire in Human Beings.* – The intrusion of non-physiological factors which begins thus in the monkeys and increases in strength amongst the anthropoid apes still further increases in man. It becomes so important in women that in studying sexual rhythm in them it is very difficult to differentiate between physiological and sociological influences. Investigations carried out, both in this country and in



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America, show that the majority of married women recognize two cycles, or peaks, in their sexual desire, the first occurring just before and the second just after the menstrual flow. A minority of women describe a different rhythm and state that desire is highest in the middle of the intervals between the menses, that is to say, at the time that ovulation is taking place. To what can we attribute this anomaly that the majority of women experience heightened desire at a time quite other than that ordained by Nature, in other words, at a time when it is unlikely that they will conceive? Nature exerts immense powers over us and she does not allow her ordinances to be lightly defeated, as they appear to be defeated here. No satisfactory explanation has yet been given of this rise of sexual desire just prior to and just after menstruation, but it is generally supposed to be socially conditioned. It has been suggested that because sexual intercourse is forbidden by almost all communities during the menstrual flow, the pre-menstrual rise of desire is the result of an anticipation of coming deprivation and that the post-menstrual rise is the result of the previously enforced continence. But it is unlikely that this entirely explains this strange phenomena which must be regarded as being primarily due to the weakening of the hormonal control of the human being and to the greater part played by the woman's brain in her bodily function.

A discussion of a similar rise and fall of desire in man will be deferred till later.

In this chapter we have dealt only with the anatomic physiological changes in love-making, and have said little or nothing of the psychic processes with which they are interwoven. This limit that has been put on the material to be considered has been deliberate. The psychology of sex is a subject in itself, and one that is dealt with in another volume.

## CHAPTER 5

# THE SEXUAL IMPULSE IN CHILDHOOD, MATURITY, AND OLD AGE

HAVING dealt with the development of the sexual characteristics and described the nature of sexuality, we can now follow the course of the sexual impulse from childhood to old age.

At one time it was supposed that childhood was undisturbed by manifestations of the sexual impulse, and that if by any chance such manifestations occurred, they must be regarded as perverse. Freud's promulgation of the theory of the 'libido' changed this way of thinking, and such infantile activities as thumb-sucking suddenly became invested with a sexual significance. We parents were suddenly stripped of our pleasant illusion that children played in a garden of innocence and, instead, were forced to see them struggling in a jungle of primitive desires. Even what had seemed to be the purest of emotions, the love of the child for his mother, was now looked upon by Freud's followers as having a sexual basis and as being linked with a primitive jealousy for the claims of his father. At one swoop the whole myth of the age of innocence was exploded. Sexuality and not innocence determined events in the nursery.

Much of the confusion that arose as the result of Freud's teaching would have been prevented had he avoided the use of that ill-chosen word 'libido'. Libido suggests libidinous, a word closely linked with sexuality. If, however, libido be taken in a wider sense to mean the 'psychic energy' of Jung, or the '*élan vital*' of Bergson, a saner view of childhood would have been retained. The tendency of children to play with their genitals would not then have been regarded as a precocious manifestation of sexuality. It would, instead,

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have been looked upon merely as a manifestation of that 'bodily pleasure-pain principle' which governs so much of a child's life. 'This means that the child behaves as though his sole preoccupation were the search after bodily satisfaction and the avoidance of bodily pain, with which latter may be equated the frustration of the former drive. Thus the infant obtains complete satisfaction from the exercise of its bodily activities . . . sucking, defecation, micturition, and stimulation of the skin, pre-masturbatory playing with the genitals, together with pleasure taken in the display of the nude body' (Strauss). It is misleading therefore to call such infantile attempts to obtain sensual gratification sexual. At the age at which they occur they have no sexual significance whatever, although later in life they will acquire this. Even by the time of puberty some sexual content may have been added to these activities, but in the nursery they are devoid of sexual meaning.

Puberty is associated with profound and widespread physical and psychological changes in the child. With its onset there begins an intense activity of the endocrine glands, and especially those closely associated with sex, such as the pituitary, the gonads, and the suprarenals, and a sudden speeding up of the growth of the genitalia and secondary sexual characteristics. Because in the girl this period is ushered in by menstruation, the onset of puberty starts even more abruptly for her than for her brother. But for both boy and girl puberty is a time of intense bodily and psychological activity, of passing from the immature to the mature, of acquiring a new adult orientation to life. Small wonder, then, that these rapid changes are not always effected without accident, and that puberty is often associated with the development of certain minor physiological and emotional disturbances.

The age of puberty coincides with the awakening of true sexual desire, and actions that previously were purely hedonistic now take on a sexual significance. The onset of

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puberty varies in different individuals, different climates, and different races, but is generally earlier in the girl than in the boy. With the attainment of full maturity the urgency of the sex-drive increases in both sexes, and is usually stronger in the youth than in the maiden. In him the desire for sexual communion is fully awake once he has gained his manhood; in the maiden, on the other hand, it is more likely to be lying there dormant, ready to be awakened by the kiss of the lover.

The duration of sexuality is subject to much wider variation than is the date of its beginning. There are men whose sexual life is at an end by the time they reach fifty, there are others who remain potent in their eightieth year. A striking example of sexual vigour persisting into a green old age is furnished by Goethe, who at seventy-five fell so desperately in love with Ulrique, a girl of nineteen, that, when his suit was refused, he wrote, 'I am lost in unconquerable desire. There is nothing left but flowing tears. Let them flow, let them flow unceasingly, but they can never extinguish the fire that burns me.' This retention of sexuality to a ripe old age seems, indeed, to have been a prerogative of many eminent men who have succeeded in preserving not only their sex-drive but also their capacity for creative work to the end of their lives. A long list of writers and artists, both living and dead, might be appended in support of the view that the retention of sexual interest in old age is a sign of intellectual and emotional vigour.

As the beginning of the reproductive life of a woman is indicated by the appearance of the menstrual flow, so is its end clearly marked by its disappearance. The menopause, climacteric, or 'change of life', as it is variously termed, is associated with involutionary changes in the genitals, and with a temporary upset in the balance of the endocrine secretions. It may occur at any time between the ages of thirty-five and fifty-five. Like that other period of disturbance of hormonal balance -- puberty -- the menopause is often associated with temporary emotional and physical disturb-

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ances. The realization that she is at the end of her reproductive powers may have a profound effect on a woman. She is apt to feel that life is slipping away from her and that she no longer retains the capacity to excite admiration or love. What may aggravate her difficulties is the fact that about the time of the menopause a woman often experiences a heightening of sexual desire. Should she be a married woman, her husband may find it impossible to meet this sudden and unexpected demand on his sexual powers. Should she be unmarried, she may turn, infatuated, in the direction of a man whose affection she is unable to gain.

Novelists are fully conversant with these facts, and the 'dangerous age of women' has provided grist for their mills. The frequency of these graver accidents of the menopause has, however, been popularly exaggerated and they are usually far less conspicuous than is suggested by the novelists. It must also be remembered that to the menopause are attached compensating advantages. 'Amongst countless numbers of women,' writes W. J. Fielding, 'the climacteric has been the beginning of a golden period of achievement. Nor is there any reason why women normally constituted should lose their sexual charms at such a time. As a matter of fact many women are more attractive at fifty than they were at twenty-five, and if their personality has been developed and enriched by the passing of the years they may be more charming at sixty than they were at thirty.'

It is a debatable question how far there can be said to be a corresponding period in the life of a man. If the male sex passes through a kind of climacteric, it is not a climacteric associated with the termination of the capacity to reproduce, since the male may retain this faculty to the end of his days. The critical age of a man, if such exists, should be regarded rather as a phase of organic involution that is general, and not primarily genital, in nature. The reason why the sexes differ in this respect is not difficult to discover. Whereas in the economy of a woman everything has been sacrificed to

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the primary purpose of her being – reproduction, – in the economy of a man nothing has been sacrificed to it. Reproduction makes small demands on his physical or psychic resources; he can therefore continue to procreate even when his powers are on the wane. On a woman, however, reproduction imposes a heavy burden, of which she must be relieved when her physical powers are no longer able to support it.

If a change of life occurs in a man the physical basis on which it rests is the same as in the case of the woman. There is a temporary upset in the balance of the endocrine secretions, often associated with a tendency on the part of the man or the woman to put on or lose weight. While passing through this period of instability the man may show the same disposition to become irritable, to worry over trifles, and to fall into moods of depression. He may also, like the woman, experience a sudden heightening of sexual desire. The sexual excitability that is sometimes a feature of this period may account for many of the so-called 'park offences', ending in an eminent and hitherto respectable member of society being charged with indecent behaviour in a public place. Unfortunately few members of the magisterial bench are conversant with the pathology of the climacteric, and many are apt to judge park offences too severely. It must, however, be obvious to anyone who stops to think that the 'exhibitionism' of which a respectable man of sixty stands accused is unlikely to be due to a newly acquired viciousness. Something must have happened in that physico-psychic complex of machinery hitherto known as the respectable and eminent Mr X to account for such a strange action. The most likely happening is a period of endocrine instability – in other words, a climacteric.

*The Strength of Sexual Urge in Different Individuals.* – The strength of sexuality varies as much in different individuals as does the capacity to enjoy music. For some men and women sexuality and all that it implies holds little interest;

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at no time in their lives have they given it more than a passing thought. In the case of other men, sex may be said to have been the axis on which their lives have turned, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say, the fly-wheel that has imparted momentum to the whole of their mechanism.

These differences in the strength of the drive bear no relation to the physique. The poorly developed office-worker may prove more potent than the champion wrestler. Sexual capacity is not a question of brawn. In all probability it depends on two factors – namely, psychological make-up and what may be termed the ‘endocrine pattern’ of the individual. By this latter term is meant the sum total of the ductless glands and the balance maintained by their secretions. If we use the term ‘personal equation’ to mean all those individual peculiarities and idiosyncrasies which have to be taken into account in estimating a man’s personality, it may be said that a man’s personal equation is determined by two factors: first, by his chromosome inheritance; and second, by his glandular or endocrine pattern. Our understanding of the endocrine factors in personality has increased enormously during the last twenty years. Even with our present restricted knowledge we are beginning to attempt to sum up different types of people in terms of their endocrine endowment: the thyroid-adrenal type represented by the poet Keats, the thyroid-pituitary personality of Shelley, and the cold, intellectual, pituitary-centred President Woodrow Wilson. With a greater insight into the relationship of the ductless glands to emotional states, these attempts to correlate personality with endocrine secretions will be made with far greater confidence than is possible at the present time. We shall then be able to explain why to one particular individual love is a thing of no importance, and to another the end and meaning of his whole existence.

In the meantime the chemistry of the emotions is too little known to allow of more than a hint being given of the type of individual in whom the sexual urge is likely to be strong.

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Experience has already taught us that sexuality is usually more vigorous amongst those in whose lives emotions and sensory impressions play an important part, such as is the case with artists generally. Amongst the scientists, the philosophers, the lawyers, and the logically-minded, on the other hand, strong sexual feelings are less often found. What is perhaps more surprising is that the same is true of those who have devoted themselves to the life of movement, to sports, athletics, and games. Taken as a class, Olympian athletes and keen sportsmen make poor lovers. Generally speaking, therefore, it may be said that it is amongst poets, musicians, and artists that sexuality is found at its highest, and amongst scientists, philosophers, intellectual, and fine athletes that it is found at its lowest. It must, however, be borne in mind that certain men and women who outwardly display very little interest in sex may actually be more generously endowed than would appear to be the case. In some of these apparently frigid people the 'libido' has found an expression in some other activity, and in some it has been strangled, through fear, anxiety, or an upbringing that has resulted in the adoption of a faulty attitude to the whole subject of sex: their capacity to love has been smothered. The consulting-rooms of the psychotherapists are filled with men and women who have never come to terms with the natural urge within them. In these unfortunate victims of a wrong education sexuality has been slowly and painfully murdered. They are victims of their upbringing, people who have failed to reconcile sexuality with the rest of their lives and have come to look upon it as an enemy that at all costs must be destroyed. Their tragedy is that they have succeeded only too well in achieving what they set out to do.

*The Periodicity in the Sexual Impulse.* • Man and the sub-human primates have the unique distinction of being able to breed whenever circumstances are propitious to the exercise of their reproductive powers. Most of the higher animals, as we have seen, have a strictly limited breeding season; only



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at the time of 'rut' are the males capable of fertilizing or the females capable of conceiving. The beginning of the rutting period therefore coincides in these animals with a sudden rise in the sexual impulse and its end with an equally sudden fall.

But the fact that human sexuality is not subject to the marked seasonal rise and fall to which that of most of the animal world is bound does not mean that human desire always remains at the same level. The sexual drive waxes and wanes like a bonfire fanned by a wind. Savage man would even appear to retain some vestige of the seasonal rise and fall characteristic of the animal world, and in widely separated parts of the globe erotic festivals have usually been held in spring or at harvest time. 'In the spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love,' and not only a young man's but also a young woman's fancy. It is not, however, of this seasonal sexual periodicity that we intend to speak, but rather of those fluctuations on a smaller scale to which the intensity of the sexual urge is subject. Desire, it has been said, does not remain on a level, but waxes and wanes. The rise and fall of desire in women has already been discussed (see page 66) and it was seen to be related to two factors, the hormones circulating in the blood and to the intervention of the cerebral hemispheres.

Havelock Ellis has suggested that feminine modesty may be traced back to sexual periodicity in her. Looked at from this point of view modesty may be said to be the escape from male attention of a female who is not yet at the period of oestrus. When, however, modesty overlaps the period of heat it meets the impact of sexuality, thus producing the behaviour known as coquetry. In this the female alternately approaches and runs away from the male, thereby fanning her wooer's ardour. Whether or not human modesty and coquetry can be traced back to such a primitive source is doubtful, but modesty undoubtedly plays an important part in the courtship of savage and barbaric people. It should be noted in

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passing that human modesty is not necessarily related to the wearing of clothes. Races who habitually go about naked are still capable of displaying modesty, and the advent of 'nudism' and sunbathing has not banished it from civilized circles. Nevertheless amongst highly civilized races the efficacy of modesty as a weapon in courtship has certainly been blunted, so that it can be looked upon as a ritual or a grace rather than, as is the case in primitive man, as an essential condition of courtship.

The periodic rise and fall of sexual desire is less marked in the man than it is in the woman. Several observers, and especially Havelock Ellis, have brought forward evidence of an annual cycle of involuntary sexual activity in men, with peaks in the spring and in the early autumn. What are more obvious are the secondary rises and falls superimposed on this larger cycle. Some investigators have even tried to prove that man, like woman, is bound to a lunar cycle, and have suggested that this is a relic of a distant age when organic life first appeared on the shores of great inland seas and lakes subject to the tidal influence of the moon. This idea is, however, highly speculative, and all that is necessary to realize is that neither in the man nor in the woman does the sexual urge remain at the same level of intensity. For a day or two it burns up into a flame, and then, whether it be satisfied or not, dies down again. It is probable that the timing of this cycle differs in different men, but in the majority it is somewhere in the region of a week.

## CHAPTER 6

### • PROBLEMS OF SEX AND MARRIAGE

THE love relationship is a personal one existing between a man and a woman, and, as such, it resents rules and regulations imposed upon it by some outside authority. Yet, because we are social beings, society insists on exercising over even the most intimate relationships some measure of control. Personal freedom must make sacrifices for the sake of social stability. Nor are these sacrifices imposed only by the more civilized forms of society. Even amongst savages some form of control is exercised over sexual activity, so that it is a mistake to look upon marriage as an artificial product of an unnecessarily complicated social order. Everywhere, from the tropics to the arctic circle, from people living the simple life of hunters and shepherds to those who live in great industrial cities, there is to be found some form of marriage. And it has always been so. There is no evidence that there ever existed complete sexual promiscuity, or any form of group marriage. So far as can be seen, amongst no people has the satisfaction of the sexual appetite been left free and unrestrained.

But human societies have not been built up on a series of negative commandments, and it will be helpful to discover what is the positive foundation on which these sexual regulations rest. The answer is clear. Their positive aim is the maintenance of the family as the fundamental unit of society. However much sexual ethics may differ in various forms of culture there is one law that is universal – the law of incest. Nowhere in the world is it permissible for cohabitation to take place between father and daughter, mother and son, brother and sister. This law of incest existed in the past as it does in the present. It is true that in the royal families of

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ancient Egypt and Peru the marriage of brother and sister was customary, but this was because, their families being god-like, no ordinary mortals could unite with them. But for the rest of the nation the law of incest held. Its object was clearly to prevent the disintegration of the family. Sexual interest would put a heavy strain on the emotional and social bonds upon which the cohesion of the family depends, and sexual interest was thrust sternly outside the family circle.

But the exclusion of the disruptive force of sexuality from the family circle was not enough. As a means of strengthening the family unit further some sort of social contract was entered into by the man and woman, a contract that had as its primary object the welfare of the children. Children, unlike the offspring of many animals, are long in reaching a stage of independence and maturity, and until they become self-supporting they must depend for their needs on the care of their parents. This can only be counted upon if those parents remain united by bonds more enduring than those forged by sexual passion. For the sake of their children, therefore, the man and woman entered into the social contract of marriage, a contract which was usually strengthened by religious as well as social sanctions. Marriage is not primarily a means of allowing a man and woman to gratify their sexual desires in a manner approved of by society, but in an institution which is concerned with the welfare of the children:

If this be so, there can be no alternative to marriage except that of relieving a man and woman of their responsibility by handing the children resulting from their union over to the care of the State. It has, indeed, been argued by Briffault and Calvertin that a State which has already assumed many of the responsibilities of the father is equally capable of taking over those of the mother. But such writers forget that the responsibilities of parents to their children are not confined to supplying them with food, clothing, and a house to live in. There are emotional requirements that a parent can

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satisfy far more effectually than any State institution. Ignorant and prejudiced though parents often are, it is doubtful whether this side of their work could be delegated with safety to an official institution.

The facts that marriage is not an artificial product of civilization and that it appears to be essential to the safeguarding of the family unit, do not necessarily mean that it need remain an inelastic institution. All social institutions, if they are to survive, must accommodate themselves to changes in surrounding conditions. Man was not made for marriage, but marriage for man. Nobody will deny that during the last two hundred years the environment in which Western Europeans live has been profoundly modified, mainly as a result of the Industrial Revolution. Conditions of life have so completely changed, and such an artificial method of living has been created, that it is now rare for young people to be able to undertake the responsibilities of marriage and the upbringing of children until at least ten years after they have reached sexual maturity. It was possible for St Paul to preach to the Corinthians, 'To avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, every woman her own husband.' In Western Europe of the twentieth century such advice as this is entirely impractical. The modern youth and maiden cannot afford to marry, for an artificial form of civilization has been created for them that has put marriage out of their reach. A crisis has therefore arisen, and because marriage now appears to be an institution unsuited to our present civilization, it runs a grave risk of being jettisoned. If we are to save it, surely it would be wise to examine the changes that have taken place in our culture, and to see whether marriage can be modified and yet retain its function of preserving social stability. •

Or it is possible that the problem should have been stated otherwise. It may be argued that because a given institution is unsuited to a new form of civilization, it is not inevitably the former which requires changing. The trend of present-

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day civilization may be more in need of scrutiny and modification than the institution of marriage. As a result of the examination of our culture we may find that what we have accepted as progress may in actual fact be retrogression, and that we are scurrying along a road that is leading us to destruction. This may well be so, for there are many reasons for believing that we are living in an age of fictitious values, an age of material prosperity and spiritual decay. There can be no doubt, at any rate, that we are far more concerned with preparing our children for success in business or in their future professions than for success in the larger and more spiritual issues of life. But this is a theme which has been developed more fully in *Sex and Society* and it cannot be dealt with adequately here.

There are many other factors that have profoundly influenced marriage in addition to the economic factor already mentioned, that few people are in a position to marry until they are approaching the age of thirty. Amongst these factors must be mentioned the increasingly widespread use of contraceptives. Whilst methods of limiting childbirth are not entirely new, it is only within the last thirty years that contraceptives have become reliable, and have been brought within the reach of the masses. This has undoubtedly produced great changes, and has allowed of the sex relationship being regarded quite differently from the way in which it was regarded two or three generations ago. If marriage is a contract entered into for the sake of the offspring, it can be argued that it is not concerned with a union from which the birth of children is excluded. Logically this may be sound, but, as is so often the case, the problem is more complicated than at first sight it appears to be. The more extra-marital relationships are permitted, the weaker is said to become the institution of marriage. Society, therefore, in order to preserve the sanctity of an institution that it regards as vital to its stability, sternly discountenances all unions that take place outside the marriage bond.

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Another new factor that affects the relationship of the sexes is the increased freedom of women. Marriage is no longer essential to a woman, although it is still, to most of her sex, highly desirable. Now that she can leave home and make a career for herself, marriage is not the only door through which she can pass in order to gain a richer and more varied experience. Economically speaking a woman can now be self-sufficient, and can meet men on an equal footing. Sex is no longer a forbidden subject of conversation, and sex matters are discussed without embarrassment by both adolescents and adults. The old idea that the woman was a passive and reluctant partner in the sexual act has also been put aside. In demanding equality with men, modern woman demands equality in the satisfaction of her sexual as well as of her economic and political needs. It is therefore not only the young man condemned to a decade of celibacy at the height of his sexual life who asks for reconsideration of his problem, but emancipated woman as well. It is useless for society to attempt to silence her by means of a shocked reproof or a vague generalization on the subject of marriage if marriage has been removed from her reach. And there are some modern women who would go even further. They would ask why, if economically self-supporting, and at the same time capable and anxious to look after a child, they should not be allowed to have one. Again marriage is no answer to their question, for it is not always the fault of a potentially good mother that the advantage of a permanent union with a legal husband has been denied to her. In countries where women outnumber men it is impossible for all of them to find husbands.

Mr Bernard Shaw has written of this revolt of woman against compulsory barrenness in the preface to his play *Getting Married*. He states that two classes are concerned in it, those who feel that motherhood is an experience necessary to their complete psychological development, and those who, though unable to find or unwilling to entertain a hus-

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band, would like to occupy themselves with the rearing of children. 'My own experience of discussing this question leads me to believe that the one point on which all women are in furious secret rebellion against the existing law is the saddling of the right to a child with the obligation to become the servant of a man. Adoption or the begging or buying or stealing of another woman's child, is no remedy: it does not provide the supreme experience of bearing the child.'

We confine ourselves to a statement of the problem, and leave it to the reader to supply the answer. Putting the world right has never appealed to the writer as an occupation for which he was in any degree fitted. Nor has he found that those who were foremost in their endeavour to frame a code of sexual ethics were particularly qualified for the task they had undertaken. As a rule the reverse would appear to be the case. 'The professors of conduct,' writes MacNeile Dixon, 'have been for the most part austere men, seldom genial, complacent, or humorous.' Particularly so have been the professors of sexual conduct, and it must be confessed that they have usually been men and women whose own sexual make-up was open to question. Many such men and women have become prominent members of watch and vigilance committees. They take their revenge on society for the poverty of their emotional and sexual lives. P. D. Ouspensky has pointed out this tendency on the part of people of what he terms 'infra-sex' to take an active part in attempts to control and restrict the sexuality of others in his chapter on 'Sex and Evolution' in *The New Model of the Universe*: ' . . . Almost all the laws controlling sex life, almost all the restrictions guiding people's choice and decision in these cases, all taboos, all fears: all these have come from infra-sex. Infra-sex precisely in virtue of its difference from normal sex, in virtue of its inability to become normal, and in virtue of its non-understanding of normal sex began to regard itself as superior, began to dictate laws to normal sex. This does not mean that all morals, all laws, and all restrictions relating to



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sex are wrong. But, as always occurs in life when right ideas come from the wrong sources, together with what is right they bear within them a great deal of what is wrong, that contradicts their fundamental essence, that brings about new confusions and new complications.'

It cannot be said that the modern professors of religion have fared very much better in helping us out of our difficulties. No one has shown himself to be more ignorant of sexual matters than the clergyman, and no institution has consistently put so many obstacles in the way of bringing the divorce laws into line with modern conditions as the Church. Unfortunately the great spiritual leaders of mankind, Christ and Buddha, spoke little about sex, and what they said is often difficult to interpret. Moreover, the real essence of religious teaching on the subject of sexuality has been lost – namely, that sex may have to be sacrificed in order to attain a certain spiritual state. Whereas the earlier Christians willingly accepted chastity, with its transmutation of sex-energy into energy of a higher order, as a means to an end, their successors too often look upon the giving up of sex as an end in itself. If a man, for the sake of his own ideal, sacrifices his sex willingly and with understanding, well and good; he sacrifices the lesser for the greater. If, on the other hand, grudgingly and without understanding he allows to be imposed upon him from outside a doctrine to which he does not subscribe, he will reap nothing but conflict and frustration.

And what about the ethical idealists? What answer have they to these questions? 'The anxiety of the ethical idealists', writes MacNeile Dixon, in speaking of sexual ethics, 'has arisen from the gnawing although undisclosed anxiety, the well-founded alarm that, religion apart, no binding laws, no well-knit principle of human conduct can be discovered.'

It may, however, be argued by those who look askance at any overhauling of the marriage system that even if it imposes hardship on certain members of the community, this is all that can be said against it. They would point out that every

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member of a social order must, for the sake of that order, make certain sacrifices. Is it too much, therefore, to ask of a fraction of the community that they should forgo the satisfaction of their sexual and parental desires?

This question inevitably involves another: does sexual continence cause either bodily or mental harm? A century ago this question would not have been formulated, or, if formulated, the answer would have been that since for men sexual intercourse outside marriage was immoral, chastity could not be harmful. Because women had no sexual needs the question was not applicable to them. Since then times have changed and knowledge has increased. This is a scientific age, and to some extent the mantle of the priest has fallen upon the shoulders of the physician. It is the medical man who is now asked to issue edicts as to what is good and bad, harmful and harmless. What has the medical man to say on the subject of chastity?

No direct yes or no can be given to any question concerning the harmfulness or harmlessness of chastity. It is necessary to ask what is meant by harm and to inquire into the conditions of the chastity. Continence of itself can do no bodily harm, and the athlete who, for the sake of the race he is about to run, abjures sexual activity, usually finds that he has enhanced rather than diminished his physical efficiency. This does not mean, however, that continence does not impose a heavy strain on many people, a strain under which some of them break down. There are men whose sexual urge is so weak, or whose sublimation of it is so complete, that continence imposes upon them little if any hardship. There are others on whom the struggle to remain chaste places so great a strain that they become either confirmed masturbators or sexual neurotics. The price paid for continence by different people varies from zero to a hundred.

Not only does the intensity of desire vary in different men and women, but so also does the efficiency of their means of combating it. If a man has conceived a certain ideal after

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which he strives, and for the sake of which he is willing to make any sacrifice, the path he follows is clearly marked. Whatever may be the hardships, he is prepared to face them with singleness of purpose. Not that he will necessarily succeed in his purpose. Those who belittle the difficulties of sexual abstinence – and they are often weakly sexed, middle-aged married people – will do well to consider the experiences of the early Christians as described in the 'Paradise' of Palladius: 'These men were vigorous and resolute, they were wholeheartedly devoted to the ideal of asceticism, they were living under the best possible conditions for cultivating such ideals, and their regime were austere to a degree that is for us impossible and almost inconceivable. Yet there was nothing that troubled them as much as sexual temptation, and this trouble, to some degree, persisted throughout life' (Havelock Ellis).

Hard as is the lot of a highly sexed man who sacrifices his sexual life for the sake of a positive ideal, it is incomparably easier than that of a man who sacrifices it without having any religious ideals. An artificially imposed continence and an obedience to a law to which he does not in fact subscribe engender in such a man an unending conflict. Tossed between the desire for satisfaction and the fear of the consequences, he is subjected to unceasing strain. Nor can a continence so maintained be termed chastity. He who is sexually continent is not necessarily sexually pure. Rohleder has even denied that sexual abstinence, in the strict sense of the word, can exist at all, for this must entail not only freedom from sexual abuse, but also abstinence from voluptuous imagination and from sexual dreams. Such a state of affairs only exists in the case of the saint or the sufferer from sexual anaesthesia. Christ himself emphasizes the fact that true continence does not end with the avoidance of an external act of adultery. 'But I say unto you that whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.' The whole emphasis of his

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teaching was placed on the inner attitude of the spirit, and not, as the Scribes and Pharisees had placed it, on the external observance of rules. It is to be feared that many modern churchmen have returned to the mode of thought of the Pharisees.

In discussing this subject of chastity, Havelock Ellis suggests that the word chastity has been too narrowly interpreted. Generally it is used to mean complete sexual abstinence, whatever may be the motive behind this repression of the natural sexual instinct. It is also tacitly assumed by those who use the word in this sense that abstinence is a virtue, again without reference to the motive behind it. But, as Flaubert wrote to George Sand in an interesting correspondence on this subject, it is only the effort that can be good, and not the result – namely, the abstinence. There is no virtue in avoiding eating, although a period of starvation may in some circumstances be good for us. It is obvious that the appetite must be controlled and gluttony forbidden. So also must control be used in the sexual field, and our sexual desires submitted to a similar discipline to that which we exercise over our other appetites. Havelock Ellis therefore prefers to define chastity as ‘self-control within the sexual field’, the Greek ‘sophrosyne’ within the sphere of sex. This ‘may sometimes involve abstinence, it may also involve indulgence; its essence lying in the acceptance of a deliberate and harmonized exercise of the psychic impulses . . . not a negative state but an active virtue.’

Chastity in this sense is a virtue that is independent of all creeds and religions, and it is a virtue that is recognized in almost all cultures, however primitive they may be, for in no tribe is the unrestricted use of the sexual faculty looked upon with favour.

It is only when control is carried so far that it arouses criticism and resentment. Instead of being a natural and necessary virtue, the practice of which adds to the dignity of sex, chastity then appears in the eyes of its critics to be an

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unnatural and artificial religious taboo and a relic of an out-moded social code. As a result of this those who pride themselves on being scientific and modern react fiercely against chastity and substitute for it the ideal of promiscuity and licence. 'Such violent oscillations from the just balance of chastity may take a considerable time to reach equilibrium, since any sudden rebound leads to another bound. We may observe this difficulty in Soviet Russia. In old Russia there was much conventional restraint, and beneath it much concealed licence, each tending to produce its consequent reaction. The immediate effect of the liberation effected by the revolution was largely in the direction of licence. To some extent that seems still to be felt, especially by those who regard restraint and regulation as *bourgeois* traits. But the main tendency is now a reaction against licence' (Havelock Ellis).

To avoid, therefore, these wide oscillations between puritanism and licence, a just and even balance must be held, and chastity be regarded as self-control within the sexual field. For to a 'normal man and woman sex contains no danger. In a normal human being sex harmonizes with all the other functions including the emotional and intellectual, and even with the desire for the miraculous if such exists in the soul of a man' (Ouspensky).

*Sublimation.* – The word sublimation is one that is much on the lips not only of psychologists, but also of all who enter into discussions on the subject of sexual ethics. For the moralist it is the final answer to the problem of continence. A man or woman who cannot find an outlet for his or her sexual drive along the channels approved of by society must sublimate that urge. It is a remedy that is offered too readily, a panacea which promises too much. The strains and stresses of such a fundamental urge as sex are not resolved with such facility as this. Neither muscular exertion nor mental diversion can effect in many people what is promised so confidently by the prescriber of sublimation. The games in which

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schoolmasters have such faith do not always divert the direction of the sexual urge into safe channels, for only when the stage of complete exhaustion has been reached are those two basic appetites, the need for food and the desire to satisfy sexuality, overwhelmed. Sublimation is difficult to achieve, and we must be chary of accepting too readily, and without realizing its limitations, this favourite panacea of the moralist.

What, actually, is this sublimation? Let us attempt to find out what it means. Havelock Ellis reminds us that the idea of sublimation appears in the writings of Plato and Aristotle. Love, said Plato, is a plant of heavenly growth, with its roots in the earth and its flower turned towards the sun. Aristotle, being more of a scientist and less of a poet, formulated the same idea in more exact terms. He connected it with the philosophical doctrine of 'katharsis', or the conversion of passion in general into a virtuous disposition. Early Christianity took the idea further, and Abbâ Macarius the Great, the first great Christian mystic, described the gradual transformation of the fine substance of the 'soul' into the still finer material of the spirit under the influence of 'Divine Fire'. To Macarius the soul was material, although a material of a nature infinitely finer than that of which the objects around us are made. 'As metals, when cast into fire, lose their natural hardness, and the longer they remain in the furnace are more and more softened by the flames', so, according to Macarius, did the less spiritual side of man's nature transform itself into something that was different and immeasurably finer in the fire of sacrifice.

P. D. Ouspensky states that this idea of the transmutation of certain matters or energies of the body into matters and energies of a finer nature exists in all those occult teachings that accept the possibility of true evolution in man. 'There are many occult and religious systems which not only recognize this, but attempt to give practical directions as to how to curb the energy of sex and how to subject it to the inter-

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ests of inner evolution. These directions are usually utterly fantastic and cannot give results, because they omit something which is most vital and most necessary. Nevertheless, the study of such theories and methods presents a certain interest from the historical point of view.'

Havelock Ellis reminds us that Macarius was the friend of St Basil, a man who was in the main stream of Christian tradition, and that this idea of true sublimation constantly recurs in the later Christian mystics. But, unfortunately, the pure doctrine of religion is seldom retained after the death of the founder. The true teaching of the Master is lost, and little by little the exponents of the religion bring it down to their own level. The original ideas are too difficult of comprehension; they have to be made more readily understandable. This is what has happened to the teaching of the Early Christian Fathers, such as Macarius, on the subject of man's sexuality. Its sacrifice, instead of being looked upon as a means to an end, has gradually become an end in itself. Sexuality must be given up not because its energy can be transmuted into higher energy, but because sexuality, except under certain prescribed conditions, is immoral. The external act of renunciation is the thing which becomes important, and the idea of an inner evolution brought about by the sacrifice of sexuality gradually disappears. For a mystical teaching which was difficult to understand there is substituted a new taboo comprehensible to everybody.

Modern psychology has borrowed the idea of sublimation, although it has lost the conception of an inner evolution. By the word 'sublimation' the present-day psychologist implies that the physical sexual impulse, or 'libido' in the narrow sense, can be transformed into some impulse of a different nature, so that it ceases to be urgent as a physical need. But, as Havelock Ellis has remarked, although this conception is widely current in popular psychology, it is not generally realized that 'this process of sublimation is a process involving much expenditure of force, and in its metaphysical and

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spiritual form far easier to talk about than to achieve'. Hirschfeld holds the same view, and denies that the sexually abstinent yield intellectual products in art or science superior to those yielded by persons not sexually abstinent. 'It is only in men of religion, and in those engaged in strenuous motor activities' that Hirschfeld considers that sublimation can take place. The writer would limit the possibility of its achievement to the religious man alone.

Once the fundamental idea behind the idea of sublimation has been appreciated it will be obvious that it is a much-abused word. Frequently it is employed to mean nothing more than the displacement of unchanged sex activity into another channel, substitution rather than sublimation. Such a displacement is quite common, as in the case of Hirschfeld's 'men engaged in strenuous motor activities'. It also happens in the neurotic, where for sexual activity is substituted a morbid symptom; it happens in the prude, where for a healthy sexual feeling is substituted a disgust with sex and with all that is connected with it.

The main difference between true sublimation and substitution of this kind is obvious; whereas in sublimation sexuality has been transmuted into something that is higher, in substitution it has been transformed into something that is lower. This is the exact opposite of the teaching of the early Christian mystics. 'Thus is the silken robe of religion torn into rags' (The Mathnawi).

That true sublimation is a change that is comparatively seldom achieved is not a personal opinion of the writer only. Freud in his introductory lectures writes, 'The plasticity and free mobility of the "libido" is not by any means retained to the full in all of us; and sublimation can never discharge more than a certain proportion of "libido", apart from the fact that many people possess the capacity for sublimation only in a slight degree.' It is as well to bear in mind, therefore, that even when some amount of sublimation has been achieved, a portion of the sexual impulse is generally left



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to be disposed of. And, as has been seen, more often than not, in the non-religious man, no sublimation has been achieved at all. The sexual urge either flows inward, as in the case of the auto-erotic and narcissistic personalities, is arrested at various levels in a number of fixations, or else finds new channels in neurotic transformations. A virtue based on a fine ideal is one thing, but a seeming virtue that is rooted in fear is another.

## CHAPTER 7

### SUCCESS AND FAILURE IN MARRIAGE

**MARRIAGES** are not made in heaven but are patiently and sometimes painfully contrived on earth. Two people agree to live together and enrich each other's lives and if they are to succeed in doing so much give and take will be necessary. For a complete success in marriage harmony on three different planes is required; the intellectual, the emotional, and the sexual. By this is meant that husband and wife must have in common many intellectual interests, be united by strong emotional ties, and be sexually adjusted. In this book it is only with the last of these three requirements that we are concerned. At the same time it must be remembered that success or failure on one plane inevitably affects harmony on another. If a man or woman is experiencing emotional difficulties, the sexual side of the marriage inevitably suffers; if the sexual relationship is unsatisfactory, differences of opinion and emotional difficulties that might otherwise have passed almost unnoticed are likely to take on an exaggerated importance. Difficulties experienced on one plane inevitably have their repercussions on another, and therefore it is not possible to write of physical maladjustment in marriage without any reference to the emotional and intellectual conditions associated with it. Marriage is more than an erotic union. As Havelock Ellis has written, 'To the truly ideal marriage there go not only an erotic harmony, but a union of many-sided and ever-deepening non-erotic affection, a community of tastes, and feelings and interests, a life in common, a probability of shared parenthood, and often an economic union.' And as life together goes on, it may be that the erotic element weakens and yet the marriage remains unshakably firm in mutual devotion.

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This does not mean that the sexual link is not of the very greatest importance in the attaining of marriage harmony. Unfortunately it is a link which is too often faulty. At the Institute of Family Relations, Los Angeles, where domestic difficulties are studied, it was found that out of 500 consecutive cases of unsuccessful marriage examined in 1930, all but one showed sexual maladjustment as a complicating factor. In what percentage this was the primary factor in the domestic upheaval and in what percentage a contributory one it is impossible to say. Nor is this necessary. Our emotional life is too complicated to allow of our seeing clearly the part played in its pattern by every strand that enters into its composition. It is enough to know that physical maladjustment is almost always present when marriages come to grief.

G. V. Hamilton's careful investigation of one hundred married couples lends support to the view that on the whole women are more subject to disappointment than men. In his research he graded marital happiness into fourteen categories, and questioned each husband and wife separately so as to find out how much happiness they had attained in their marriage relationship. In the highest grades (seven to fourteen) there were fifty-one men and only forty-five women, leaving forty-nine men and fifty-five women in the lower grades of satisfaction. This slightly greater disappointment with marriage of women is not difficult to explain. For a woman, marriage means more than for the man, and should it not come up to her expectations her disappointment is likely to be greater. A man is more detached from his home and his family than a woman, and they do not absorb so much of his being. He is therefore less overwhelmed by any failure on the part of his marriage to supply all that he had previously expected of it.

What has thrown into greater prominence the disappointment of a woman with her marriage is her new outlook on it. In bygone days marriage and the bearing of children was looked upon as a sacred duty, and it was considered enough

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that a woman had not shirked it. This was sufficient reward to her and any personal gratification which resulted from the union was regarded as purely incidental. This was the view of marriage promulgated by society and sanctified by the Church. Men were the first to rebel against this ancient conception of marriage as a family and social duty. They began to demand that personal preference should have a greater place in the choice of a mate. They were no longer content merely with doing the right thing, but demanded from their marriage some measure of private satisfaction. But even though men had put forward and obtained recognition for these personal claims, women, during the greater part of the nineteenth century, still continued to marry without feeling that they had any private rights beyond those of a home, a social position, security, and the satisfaction of having children. Reputed to have no erotic requirements of their own, they accepted physical maladjustment with resignation, and would no more have thought of demanding sexual satisfaction than they would have thought of claiming the right to wear trousers or enter the Houses of Parliament. All this has now changed. Not only do women enjoy both of these last-named privileges, but they also expect sexual satisfaction from their marriages. They have therefore increased their demands on marriage and at the same time their chances of reaping disappointment from it.

To live with this new type of emancipated wife a new type of husband is necessary. A man can no longer gloss over his own deficiencies as a lover by pointing out that he has provided his wife with an excellent home, nor can he excuse the absence of adjustment on the physical plane by saying that, after all, this only affects him. Intercourse has ceased to be regarded as a solo in which the woman plays only a passive part. It is now looked upon as a duet, in which, in spite of the fact that the male takes the lead, the woman must have her share. It is therefore an activity for the success of which both are responsible and for the failure of which both must suffer.

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These new conceptions enrich the more successful marriages, and at the same time throw into prominence the failures.

Of all the obstacles standing in the way of sexual harmony by far the commonest is ignorance. This word is used in its widest sense, to include not only the absence of knowledge, but also the existence of wrong ideas. It is, indeed, the latter type of ignorance that is at the root of most sexual difficulties, and it is better to approach marriage completely ignorant of all that it means than with wrong ideas incubated by a faulty upbringing.

What makes ignorance such a potent cause of difficulty in marriage is the fact that comparatively few people realize how much they have to learn. They comfort themselves with the thought that love is an instinct, and that everything can therefore be left to the prompting of Nature. One does not have to learn how to eat and digest one's food, so why should it be necessary to study such a natural function as making love? But even if we accept this analogy between eating and loving as a just one, it does not carry much weight. By means of art man has developed and refined even such a primitive activity as eating until it has become something infinitely less crude than the mere swallowing of food. If it has been worth man's while to cultivate his palate so as to obtain from his food a maximum of rich impressions, how much more is it worth his while to refine and educate a faculty that is so closely linked up with his emotional life. Surely the art of love-making is as worthy of cultivation as the art of eating and drinking. Yet there is a deep-seated aversion on the part of many people to the idea that by knowledge and art, sexual union can be converted from a crude physical experience into an act which expresses to the full the strong emotional ties that binds two people together. It was, indeed, with the greatest difficulty that the writer of this book some fifteen years ago induced a well-known firm of publishers to allow him to retain the title, 'The Art of Love' to a chapter he had been asked to contribute to a work on marriage difficulties. It was

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objected that such a title made love appear to be something that was artificial rather than natural. The title also had about it a flavour of the exotic and the decadent, and aroused in the minds of the publishers suggestions of practices which, even if not actually immoral, were at any rate decidedly un-British. The blue pencil of the publishers swept across the whole of the contribution. It was an action that symbolized the point of view of half the British and American public.

And this is unfortunately also the point of view of many British and American husbands. Technique in love-making is considered unnatural and unhealthy, all very well for 'Dagoes' and foreigners, but not for honest, clean-living British and American husbands. Rather than run the risk of being demoralized by these foreign practices, such husbands prefer to fall back upon Nature, forgetting that even so natural an activity as motherhood has had to be supplemented by mothercraft, and that mothercraft is now accepted as a definite branch of knowledge. Only when husband-craft and wife-craft obtain equal recognition will maladjustment on the physical plane of marriage become a less frequent cause of divorce.

This book deals only with general principles, and does not attempt to act as a guide to the intricacies of sexual intercourse. It can, however, be said that many errors in love-making would be avoided if husbands recognized the differences in the attitude of a man and of a woman to the sexual act set forth in Chapter 3. Of particular importance in this connexion is the longer time required by the woman to reach the zenith of sexual feeling marked by the occurrence of the orgasm. This, indeed, is the commonest cause of female dissatisfaction with the physical side of married life, as is amply supported by Hamilton's careful analysis of marriage difficulties. As many as fifty-five out of the hundred husbands questioned on this subject, stated that their orgasm took place too quickly for their wives' satisfaction. The replies of

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the wives were equally illuminating. To the question, 'Do you believe that your husband's orgasm occurs too quickly for your own pleasure?' forty-eight answered 'yes' (with reservation) and only thirty-three gave to the question an unqualified 'no'.

Occasionally the husband's orgasm occurs so prematurely that the condition must be considered pathological, and some form of medical treatment is required. In the majority of cases, however, all that is required to put the matter right is the employment of a suitable technique. Part of this technique consists in an adequate preparation of the female partner for the second phase of intercourse. It has already been pointed out that to the woman the preliminary phase of 'courtship', or what is generally termed 'love-play', is a necessary means of preparing her for the later stages of physical union. Tumescence must precede detumescence, and unless the woman's sexual desires are fully aroused, she will not be able to take any pleasure in subsequent events. In this case she will either have no orgasm at all, however long the act lasts, or else it will be so retarded that the husband will have finished long before she has reached it. Unfortunately, many men, and more especially those husbands who regard any form of technique as artificial, cut short, or even omit, this important part of intercourse, so that their wives are never fully prepared, and therefore have little chance of obtaining the satisfaction that is their due. Others, while conscious of the importance of making love-play a preliminary to every act of union, are so inexpert in their methods that they never succeed in achieving their object.

It may also happen that because of his ignorance of the cycle that exists to a woman's sexuality, a husband makes attempts to arouse his wife's desires at a time when she is disinclined for all sexual intimacies. This, indeed, is a frequent cause of a woman being termed 'frigid'. Most authorities agree that complete sexual anaesthesia, or frigidity, in a woman is extremely rare. Moreover, before we make such a

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diagnosis, we must draw a distinction between the absence of desire and the absence of pleasure in coitus. Desire may exist, but be followed by no pleasure in intercourse. Even when there is neither desire nor pleasure, the woman need not necessarily be frigid. The cause of her frigidity may lie in her husband and not in herself. The explanation of it has already been given. Whereas in a man the sexual impulse develops spontaneously and actively, in a woman, however strong it potentially may be, its manifestations must be called out. This is the responsibility of the husband, a responsibility which, through ignorance, prejudice, or lack of insight, he may not be able to fulfil.

Nevertheless, frigidity does exist in both sexes. Havelock Ellis points out that 'women tend to be frigid under the conditions of modern civilization, since these conditions involve profound ignorance of sexual matters in both sexes, bad education, prudery, and an abnormally late age for the commencement of sexual relationships'. And, strange as it may seem, the same conditions are also responsible for the frequency of a condition that is exactly the opposite to sexual hypoaesthesia – namely, sexual hyperaesthesia. The restrictions imposed by our civilization impede the channels of sexual expression and at the same time stimulate desire. The result of this is the production of a state of continual excitation with a shutting off of all means of expression.

A certain degree of sexual hyperaesthesia is, of course, a normal feature of courtship, manifesting itself among animals as extreme sexual excitement, and in man as constant brooding on the charms of the beloved. Under the conditions imposed by our civilization, this sexual hyperaesthesia may be indefinitely prolonged, and end in erotic excitation being produced by objects and actions which have no normal relationship to the sexual sphere. All things connected with persons of the opposite sex, such as parts of the body or garments or bodily functions, are then apt to become not merely sexual symbols, but objects that arouse sexual passion. In



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this way a soil is prepared in which may take root various forms of 'fetishism' in which there is a shifting of sexual emphasis from the total person to some anatomical feature, article or clothing, or body-activity of that person. Prolonged sexual hyperaesthesia is, indeed, an important factor in the development of many varieties of sexual neurosis and deviations, and since sexual hyperaesthesia is common, neurosis and deviation are also common. This is one of the penalties exacted of us by the form of sexual culture that we have evolved. It is, indeed, as much a part of this as, say, unemployment is a part of our industrial system. Nor need we be surprised that this is so. If we contrive a form of civilization in which all the young and the most sexually vigorous are kept in a state of continual excitement, and yet deprived of the means of expressing it, Nature inevitably protests. We may decide that the culture we have contrived is worth the price that we are paying for it, but we cannot pretend that it has been purchased without cost. The full price that is paid is only known to those who have to deal with the unhappy sexual neurotics that pass through the consulting-rooms of the psychotherapists.

The existence of a definite sexual neurosis is itself a frequent cause of difficulty in marriage. Although no statistics can be brought forward to support the view that sexual neuroses are far commoner in highly civilized communities than amongst more primitive cultures, there can be no doubt that this is the case. The more strenuous demands of life, and the unnatural conditions under which the sexual impulse develops, combine to make it difficult for many people, after a long period of chastity enforced by fear rather than for the sake of an ideal, to function normally. Hamilton found that only fifty-five of the one hundred husbands, and thirty-eight out of the one hundred wives he questioned (all belonging to the upper strata of the community), regarded their potency as normal. As many as forty-one per cent of the husbands confessed that there was, or had been, a difficulty in securing

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potency, and twenty-four per cent of the wives regarded the potency of their husbands as defective!

Over ninety per cent of the cases of impotency, complete or partial, that are seen in the consulting-room are due, not to existence of any physical defect, but to psychological difficulties. Behind the difficulty there generally lurks some anxiety or fear connected with sex, a fear that inhibits all sexual activity. It is, indeed, surprising how many men and women are genuinely frightened of sexuality and everything that is connected with it. Or, perhaps, when the conditions under which these patients have hitherto lived and the manner of their upbringing have been gone into, it ceases to be surprising. If from the beginning a child is taught to regard the early manifestations of sexuality in himself as something that is essentially impure, if as a young man he learns to regard desire as the temptation of the evil one, and women as the devil's instrument, if he comes to believe that absence of interest in sex is synonymous with spirituality, and interest in sex another name for lust, it is scarcely surprising that when he eventually marries he finds that his potency is impaired. Nor are men the only sufferers from a wrong upbringing. So far an unfair proportion of blame for failure on the physical plane of marriage has been placed on the husbands, but wives are also frequently to blame. No woman who approaches marriage with either terror or contempt for the sexual act is likely to get any satisfaction from it, however skilful a lover her husband be.

This, indeed, is the distinguishing feature of what Ouspensky calls *infra-sex* – namely, that in a man or woman of *infra-sex* sexuality is uncoordinated with any other function. To such a person, sexuality appears as a hostile force that leads into 'temptation, or sin, or crime, or insanity, or debauchery'. This negative attitude to sexuality may have different results. There may be total impotence, incapacity for external function, or sensation. There may be capacity for sensation connected with incapacity for external func-

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tion – that is, the presence of desires, but the improbability of satisfying them. There may be capacity for external function connected with complete absence of sensation. There may be capacity for sensation only on the condition of abnormal external function. In all these cases sex sensations are accompanied by a feeling of disharmony between sex and the other sides of inner life, particularly with the higher, or those which are taken to be higher; and as a result there arises a non-understanding of sex, terror of sex, and disgust of sex' (P. D. Ouspensky).

The best hope of dealing with these difficulties lies not so much in the prolonged and difficult psychological treatment necessary to effect readjustment, but in the avoiding of the initial errors that have led to the development of this faulty attitude to sexuality. Only by paying more attention to a child's sex education, and by ensuring that he starts by learning that there is nothing unclean, shameful, or wicked in this mysterious force whose presence he has discovered, will there be a chance of reducing the harvest of infra-sex in later years. This question is, however, dealt with more fully in Chapter 14.

In addition to the difficulties arising from defective potency on the part of the husband or wife, there are difficulties due to an inequality in the strength of desire of the two partners in marriage. Only exceptionally are the husband and wife equally balanced in this respect, one almost always proving more highly sexed than the other. Indeed, if he or she were to speak freely, either the husband or the wife would be likely to confess that, although the partnership was in every other respect ideal, he or she regretted that the other was not a little more passionate.

No provision can be made against this natural inequality in the strength of the sexual urge in different men and women, since there is no means by which it can be discovered prior to marriage, except by pre-marital intercourse. Fortunately it need not be an insuperable cause of difficulty,

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provided that there be tolerance and harmony on the intellectual and emotional planes of contact. Where, however, these neutralizing forces are not present, the inequality of passion may be a fruitful cause of trouble. This is especially likely to be the case when an emotional and passionate woman finds herself wedded to an intellectual and weakly-sexed type of man, for even if the latter realizes that the peace of the home is being jeopardized by his lack of sexuality, with the best will in the world he may still be unable to satisfy his wife's needs. His realization that things are difficult for his wife may even make the situation worse, for the knowledge that he is at fault may diminish his self-confidence, and end in his coming to the conclusion that there is something radically wrong with his potency. Should the wife at the same time happen to be of the domineering and shrewish variety and make no attempt to hide her contempt for her husband's weakness, complete impotence may be the final result.

The attitude of the wife to any sexual difficulties her husband may be experiencing and the part she plays in intercourse are, of course, of the greatest importance to the attainment of sexual harmony. So far the emphasis has been placed on the man's responsibility in coitus, since it falls to him to awaken his wife's latent sexuality. But intercourse is an act on which two actors are engaged, and sometimes a failure to achieve sexual harmony is due to the wife rather than to the husband. A clever wife knows not only all the ruses by means of which her husband's desire can be stirred, but she is also able to help him to understand how her own needs can be best satisfied. She does not merely submit to his embraces, but collaborates with him towards the common aim of mutual satisfaction. And what is of importance is that she must do all this without ever letting him know that it is she who is teaching him to become an expert lover. Even although women have gained their independence, the nature of sexual love remains the same. In the act of physical

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union, it is the male that must play the dominant part, and if the husband has sunk to the second place in the home, as is often the case in a twentieth-century ménage, he is only too likely to occupy the second place also in the sphere of love. The domineering wife not infrequently possesses an impotent husband. It is his unconscious protest against his intolerable position.

It sometimes happens that a wife misinterprets her husband's lack of sexuality, more especially when, after several years of married life, she notes a weakening of his desires. Because he no longer solicits her favours with that ardour which marked the beginning of their married life, she concludes that he no longer loves her, or even that his love has strayed to another woman. If she is of a jealous, possessive type, this galling thought will react strongly on her feelings, and may easily produce a domestic crisis. If, on the other hand, she adopts a more philosophic attitude, she will probably conclude that her discovery merely confirms the common view, that men are by nature polygamous. What can be said on this subject?

First it must be realized that a falling off in the frequency of intercourse occurs in the great majority of marriages, successful or unsuccessful. Mixed up with sexuality is a great deal of curiosity, a sense of being in the presence of the unknown, a feeling of novelty which heightens desire and is the cause of the excessive indulgence of the early months of marriage. It is therefore only natural that once this curiosity has been satisfied and the unknown has yielded up its secrets, the frequency of intercourse should drop to its natural level. It is not that familiarity breeds contempt, but that unfamiliarity no longer acts as an artificial stimulus. The same phenomenon would indeed be noted in the behaviour of unmarried men and women if intercourse were permitted them. The youth who is struggling to remain continent is struggling not only with his sexual urge, but also with his imagination, which weaves round the sexual act a vast superstructure of

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fantasy. If he were permitted to submit the picture he has painted to the test of experience, the artificial would disappear and only the real remain. Sexuality would no longer retain that position of exaggerated importance it occupies in his mental and emotional horizon, but it would take its natural place in his life.

With regard to the well-known assertion that men are by nature polygamous and women monogamous, we are in agreement with Havelock Ellis that it embodies a wrong use of words. The phrase would have more meaning if for the terms 'polygamous' and 'monogamous' were substituted 'poly-erotic' and 'mono-erotic'. Few men living under our present form of culture want more than one permanent marriage, although they may sometimes desire more than one sexual relationship. Still less practicable would it be for a woman to carry on with two families, owning different fathers, although she may still be capable of being sexually attracted by another man to whom she is not wedded. Women are as well able as men to feel affection for more than one person at the same time, although, as Havelock Ellis has pointed out, they are usually more fastidious in their sexual choice. This is not surprising when we keep in mind the deeper significances that sex has for a woman, and the greater part played in her choice by social and other considerations. It may therefore be said that, apart from this difference in their attitude to sexuality, men and women are the same; they are both monogamous and at the same time poly-erotic. To recognize this fact is of great practical importance, and failure to accept it is a fruitful cause of trouble. Because a husband or a wife feels sexually attracted by someone else, he or she may be tempted to invest that new person and those new emotions with qualities that do not belong to them. The new loved one appears in the eyes of the person attracted to be the ideal husband or wife, the emotions to be the dawn of a perfect love, only to be reached through the irksome gates of divorce. Instead of accepting the fact that

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marriage does not preclude the growth of a sexual love for another person, the discovery of this new devotion is regarded as a signal for the institution of divorce proceedings, or else deplored as a major disaster. It would be particularly useful if this knowledge could permeate into the studios of Hollywood, where the accepted method of dealing with poly-erotic manifestations is by means of an unending series of marriages, divorces, and re-marriages. Each new love is greeted as a unique example of '*la grande passion*', to be laid aside shortly in favour of another so far superior to it as to make divorce and re-marriage an imperative necessity. And all this is done in the name of morality, for it is not considered respectable that a married man should look with favour on any woman other than his wife. Not that the adjustments that are rendered necessary by such a happening can be easily made. They call for a large-hearted understanding on the part of all concerned, for a mutual effort, and for an equable sense of justice that are difficult to achieve. Finally, they entail the conquest of those primitive reactions of jealousy and self-pity that are such fruitful causes of disharmony in marriage.

The widespread use of contraceptives has had its effect on the married as well as on the unmarried, by allowing of a separation being made between the sexual act and its consequences. Every man and woman embarks on marriage endowed with certain conjugal and parental impulses and aspirations. In one individual the first of these is the predominant impulse, in another the second; in a few they are equally balanced. Generally speaking, it may be said that a stable home is more easily constructed when both partners are strongly parental, and that there are very few successful marriages where both the husband and wife are predominantly conjugal. This is not surprising, for, as we have seen, the erotic link is likely to weaken after several years, so that the conjugal tie is loosened. The parentally-minded couple, on the other hand, find in their children a bond that strengthens

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as the years pass by, in time becoming so powerful that it holds them together when all desire for each other has ceased.

It sometimes happens that a conjugally-minded man marries a woman whose main desire is that she should have children. For a few years all may go well, and then the wife tends to find more and more satisfaction in her family, and less in her conjugal relationship. Less frequently, because the emotions associated with paternity are as a rule weaker than those associated with maternity, it is the parentally-minded husband who finds himself mated to the conjugally-minded wife. Here, because his wife cannot or will not satisfy his longing for children, the husband is likely to lose his love for her. She, on the other hand, occupied only with her own interests and pleasures, may develop into that trying partner in a marriage, the exacting invalid, the expensive spendthrift, or the especially disturbing *femme ennuyée*. These examples serve to emphasize how important it is that in a married couple the conjugal and parental factors should be balanced, particularly nowadays, when birth control has allowed of their being separated. A modern wife, who, in spite of her husband's aspirations, is determined to avoid childbirth, can maintain her marital relations without paying, as did her predecessors, the price of a child. The modern husband who has no desire for fatherhood can have regular intercourse, and yet withhold from his wife what she wants more than anything else in the world – namely, a child. Contraception, like every other accession of power, brings with it new dangers as well as new benefits.

There is another objection that can be brought, not so much against contraceptive measures as against bad contraceptive methods. Three conditions must be fulfilled in order that a contraceptive technique may be considered satisfactory: first, it must be reasonably certain; second, it must cause no harm; and third, it must interfere as little as possible with the sexual act. There are certain methods of birth control that fulfil the first of these two conditions, but fail as



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regards the third. Sexual union should be an entirely spontaneous and free manifestation of love. Starting with such an ordinary expression of affection as a kiss, it begins to gather force in the greater intimacies of the love-play, proceeds to the crescendo of full union, and dies away gradually in the diminuendo of the afterglow or epilogue. Anything that introduces a jarring note into this spontaneous and natural evolution of love, either because it is aesthetically distasteful, or because it breaks the natural sequence of events through the necessity of fulfilling contraceptive requirements, is to be deprecated. So also are all methods that oblige the female partner to retire in order that she may carry out certain measures, at a time when she should be lying relaxed and enjoying the memory of the sexual communion that has just taken place. For this reason those methods are best which can be carried out beforehand, such as the insertion of some sort of rubber pessary or cap. This obviates the breaking off of intimacies and endearments at a critical stage of their progression, and therefore interferes less with the natural sequence of events. It also relieves the male partner of all responsibility, and avoids the difficulties that many weakly-sexed husbands encounter, when they are asked to adopt a contraceptive technique.

Finally it should be realized that complete harmony in physical intercourse is not likely to be achieved in the early stages of married life. Nor is this surprising. The sexual act is more than a physical union, it is the outward expression of a complex emotional, intellectual, and even spiritual relationship. It is not to be expected, therefore, that a relationship of such richness can be adequately expressed from the beginning, particularly when it is remembered that in one of the partners sexuality may be lying latent, in need of skilful awakening. Nor is it surprising that a husband who has had no previous sexual experience often approaches his task with diffidence, and sets about it with lack of skill. In spite of the hesitation of many people to accept such a description

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of it, love is an art, and an art must be learnt. Books, whilst they may supply a knowledge of general principles, cannot teach an art. For this are necessary experience, the slow and painful tutorship of trial and error, and the gradual attainment of mutual understanding. Even the more direct help that a personal adviser can give is limited. But the fact that both partners are working together towards a common end, and that both are striving to understand each other's needs, will in the end forge out of the very difficulties that have been surmounted yet another link in the chain that binds them together. What has been achieved *à deux* will always, in the long run, prove of far greater value than what has been reached through the help of any outside agency.

## CHAPTER 8

### ROMANTIC LOVE

IT would be nonsense to suggest that the kind of love that we can call romantic was unknown in the ancient world, or indeed prior to the Middle Ages. Examples of romantic love in the distant past are too common to allow of such an assertion being made. Love of this kind provides an excellent basis for a love affair but it is less certain whether it will lay a foundation firm enough to support the more solid and enduring structure of a marriage. There are many people who believe that it does, but it must be borne in mind that such an idea as this is comparatively modern and accepted only in a few countries. In most lands marriages are still arranged on other grounds than romance, and it would appear that even when the romantic link is entirely lacking such marriages often prove astonishingly stable.

Romance endows the love-object with many qualities that it does not actually possess, colours it with the hues of the rainbow, and projects upon it feelings that are not there. So long as the loved one is unattainable these romantic embellishments can be maintained, but marriage sifts the imaginary from the real and is likely to shatter them. That is why the *mariage convenable* so often outlasts the romantic union of peer and barmaid or chauffeur and mistress. The familiarities of marriage dispel all illusions, and such couples find themselves living together, but at the same time looking at each other as strangers, with different tastes, standards, and backgrounds.

In order to arrive at some understanding of this romantic conception of love, it will be as well to cast an eye on the past history of love and marriage. Bertrand Russell has made an excellent historical survey in his work *Marriage and Morals*. He has looked back on the Middle Ages, and found them

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exceedingly dark, marriage being at its lowest because of the victory of the barbarians and of the degraded view that official Christianity took of all manifestations of the sexual impulse. It is as well to remember also that even before the Middle Ages – as, for example, in the Classical era of Greece and Rome – romance played only a very small part in marriage. The Greek and Roman matrons were guardians of the home and mothers of children rather than soulmates of their husbands. For love, in the romantic sense in which we are using that word now, the husband went elsewhere, seeking in some more or less temporary relationship what was lacking in his home. Nor was any disgrace attached to his doing so, for the satisfaction of sexuality was neither a sin nor an offence against the State.

In the Dark Ages love sank into an abyss. Although the Church taught officially that sexuality was a sin, its leaders wallowed in debauch. Bishops lived with their own daughters, and archbishops promoted their male favourites to neighbouring Sees. The Abbot-elect of St Augustine, in 1171 at Canterbury, was found on investigation to have seventeen illegitimate children in a single village, and the Bishop of Liège in 1274 as many as sixty-five. Even sexual relations within marriage were degraded by the views enunciated by the Church and because all sexual manifestations were vicious, it mattered little whether the couple were married or not. After Pope Gregory VII had made an effort to clean up the ecclesiastical stables and a movement for the celibacy of the clergy had gained momentum, the status of marriage still remained at a low level. The views of St Paul on the subject of sexuality were not calculated to beautify the conception of love. 'To avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and every woman her own husband.' Such a conception as this could be of very little assistance in idealizing the sexual relations between a husband and his wife. Christianity and barbarism combined in the work of besmirching all that appertained to love.

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It is to the poet and the troubadour that we owe the conception of romantic love. The essence of romantic love is that it looks upon the love-object as precious and exceedingly difficult to possess. Utter devotion to it is associated with a reverence so profound that it almost necessarily excludes all desire for intimacy. Such a combination of emotions, reverence, and unattainability, can be very easily accounted for. Church and barbarian alike had so degraded the idea of physical love that it was impossible to reconcile it with a feeling of reverence for the loved one. The love therefore that the poets and troubadours sang about was so pure that it must of necessity remain unsullied, and unsatisfied yearning provided a rich soil on which moral and cultural perfection flowered. The spiritual element began more and more to dominate all other feelings, until in time a great gulf was fixed between this idealized form of love and the sexual relationship, and in the view of some people to-day this great gulf still persists. There are many men who, because of their attitude to sexuality, cannot reconcile physical relations with a feeling of reverence for a woman. They are compelled therefore to divide womankind into two great categories: those who can be respected, and those with whom it would be possible to have sexual relationships. This conception is pictorially portrayed in Watts' picture *Sacred and Profane Love*. The antithesis that many men have created between love and sexuality is often retained by them throughout life, so that when they marry they find that they are impotent. How can the woman they have led to the altar be associated with the sordidness of sex? The two ideas are irreconcilable. So the wife remains unsullied and a virgin.

Bertrand Russell points out that in France and Burgundy the troubadour's view of the spirituality of unrequited love was influenced by yet another conception – namely, that of courtly love. From the knight's view of love the possibility of attainment was not so rigidly excluded. Chivalry, whilst it glorified love, did not purge it of all its physical attributes.

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Instead, love in the hands of the knights became rather an elaborate kind of game, with its own rules and code of behaviour administered by the special 'Courts of Love'. Many of its rules were silly, and much that happened in the various Courts of Love scattered throughout Europe strikes us moderns as being extremely artificial, but undoubtedly this glorification of love by the knights did much to implant in men a respect and courtesy towards women. The movement also succeeded in creating a revulsion against the mistaken teaching of the Church and demanded a place for the lover in life. It was the first lover's charter, that claimed the right of a man and a woman to realize and to enjoy the gifts with which they had been endowed. Love, although it ceased to be Platonic, still remained poetic.

The romantic view of love reached its zenith in the romantic movement of the last century, and Shelley may be looked upon as its protagonist. Shelley found in love a world of exquisite emotion and imaginative thought, which sought expression in his poetry. He inveighed against the artificial restraints that debarred him from wandering freely in the land he had discovered, and would have thrown down all the barriers with which the policeman moralists of the world had encumbered the ground. He demanded freedom to enjoy to the full the emotion that produced his poetry, and saw no reason why love should ever be restrained.

I never was attached to that great sect  
Whose doctrine is that each one should select  
Out of the crowd a mistress or a friend,  
And all the rest, though wise and good, commend  
To cold oblivion; though it is the code  
Of modern moralists, and the beaten road,  
Which those poor slaves with weary footsteps tread  
Who travel to their home among the dead  
By the broad highway of the world, and so  
With one chain'd friend, perhaps a jealous foe,  
The dreariest and the longest journey go.

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But Shelley, in demanding this complete licence, made two mistakes: first, in imagining that love can ever be entirely free; and second, in not realizing that it was the obstacles to his desires that gave impetus to his poetry. He was a liberator as well as a poet, and if the barriers had not been there, he would have had to have invented them. Shelley owed much to the conventional restraints put on love, and so do all lovers of his poems.

But romantic love is not merely the creation of the poets and knights. The novels and plays of the middle of the last century dealt extensively with the same theme. Frequently it was presented in the form of a struggle between the younger and the older generations, the parents demanding a satisfactory social basis for marriage, and the children insisting on the choices of their hearts. Gradually what the poets and the novelists had taught became the common opinion of the people. Romantic love, instead of being an accident to marriage, soon became the basis on which all marriages must be built. Especially was this so in America and England, two countries that have always prided themselves on their freedom. But this conception of romantic love has brought new difficulties. It is good that two people marrying should be shrouded in a glamorous mist, but it is necessary also that they should be standing with their feet on solid ground. Marriage is not all romance, and for the successful building of a home in this work-a-day world of ours something more is needed than beautiful thoughts and rare emotions. In Bertrand Russell's words, 'Romantic love is the source of the most intense delights that life has to offer. In the relation of a man and woman who love each other with passion and imagination and tenderness, there is something of inestimable value, to be ignorant of which is a great misfortune to any human being. I think it important that a social system should be such as to permit this joy, although it can only be an ingredient in life, and not its main purpose.' The place of romantic love in marriage could not have been put better.

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Let us be thankful to the poets for having rescued love from the abyss, but let us contrive that we have some material of a more solid and enduring nature, more substantial than passion and beautiful ideas when we start to build our homes.



## CHAPTER 9

### • PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE

So far only the sexual factors in marriage have been considered, since sex is the main subject of this book. It is, however, impossible to discuss success and failure in marriage as though it were only an erotic union. A whole series of questions may arise with respect to a contemplated marriage, such as the age of the contracting parties, health and heredity, the advantages and disadvantages of a premarital medical examination, birth control, and the part played in a successful union by such factors as compatibility of temperament. However brief and incomplete our examination of these points may be, some reference to them is necessary.

On the subject of the ideal age for marriage there is, as is only to be expected, much difference of opinion. Hart and Shields, as a result of their experience in the Domestic Relations Court of Philadelphia, are opposed to early marriages. Dickenson and Lura Beam support their views, having found that the age of those wives that could be regarded as well adjusted to their husbands was somewhat above the average. That this should be so is to be expected, since maturity ought to bring with it the capacity to form sounder judgements. At the same time, maturity brings with it more fixed habits that reduce the capacity to adjust, and for this reason many other writers are equally emphatically in favour of early marriage. Sometimes, however, their enthusiasm rests more on eugenic than on domestic grounds. Hagen and Max Christian, basing their decision on eugenic considerations, advise that a man should marry at twenty-five and a girl below this age, and that they should face, for the sake of the health of their children, any economic difficulties which stand in their way. *Tot Homines quot sententiae.*

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Whatever may be the ideal, it is the economic situation which usually determines the age of marriage. Statistics obtained from marriage registers show that the average age in England is twenty-nine for men, and twenty-six and a half for women. A more detailed survey of the marriage age reveals the fact that earlier marriages are commoner in the rural districts. This is obviously due to the fact that it is an advantage to the agricultural labourer to marry young, whilst in London, where a greater proportion of the professional and educated classes live, the standard of life is too high to allow of early marriage. The statutory age for marriage which fixes the lower limit for it is in England sixteen for both sexes. When the contracting parties are under the age of twenty-one, the consent of parents or guardian must first be obtained.

Although the State takes an interest in the age of those who intend to get married, it shows no concern in the far more vital question of their physical and mental health. This is all the more surprising when we remember that it is upon the shoulders of the State that the care of the offspring falls should defective children result from the union. As the law stands at present there is no reason why a mentally defective man should not marry an equally defective girl and produce a dozen defective children to be supported at the taxpayers' cost. It is true that the certified lunatic is not allowed to marry, but since the legal definition of insanity was reached at a time when the study of psychopathology was in its infancy, this does not prevent the union of many people who are not certifiable, but nevertheless totally unfit to have children. Unfortunately alienists are still in doubt about the genetics of mental diseases, although they are agreed that if two mental defectives marry, all their children are likely to be subnormal. There is some doubt, however, whether sterilization is a legal operation in this country, even with the patient's consent. This is so in spite of the unanimous opinion expressed by the Royal Commission appointed in

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1934, which, although it opposed the compulsory sterilization of mental defectives, was entirely in favour of sterilization with a defective's consent. What makes the situation still more ridiculous is that the law against sterilization was passed in days when it was synonymous with castration, and therefore a mutilating operation. To sterilize, therefore, is illegal, even although this can now be effected by means of a trifling procedure (that of ligaturing certain ducts) that does not in any way impair the health of the patient. Indeed, in the case of the male the operation is the same as that formerly carried out by exponents of Steinach's teaching on the subject of 'rejuvenation'. According to Steinach's views, ligature of these ducts results in an improvement in the general health and a raising of sexual capacity. It is therefore a strange anomaly that, although a patient may have this operation carried out for reasons of health, he may not have it done for the purpose of preventing the birth of defective children.

The question of the enforced sterilization of the mental defective is, of course, in quite a different category to voluntary sterilization, since it concerns the freedom of the individual. It is, however, a distressing thought that every year legal marriages are contracted by feeble-minded people, by those who inherit unstable nervous systems conducive to the carrying out of criminal acts, and by patients suffering from inheritable diseases. This thought has apparently made a greater impression in America than it has in this country. Twenty-six American States by 1932 had passed sterilization laws, California having given them the lead. These laws permit of the sterilization of idiots, imbeciles, epileptics, the feeble-minded, and the insane. In some States mental degenerates and sexual criminals are included in the list. 'Only those may be sterilized who are considered to be a menace to society, and whose defects in all probability hereditary. Every safeguard is thrown round the patient, and it is only the man or woman who is too defective to give con-

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sent that is sterilized by the permission of the parents or guardians' (W. V. Richmond).

Closely connected with the question of heredity is that of the marriage of first cousins. Are the children of such a union likely to be less healthy than those of a man or a woman who are not related? This is a question that is often asked. The answer is that this will depend entirely on the stock from which they come. If the stock be good and the family be free from all such inheritable troubles as mental defectiveness, epilepsy, and insanity, there is no reason why the children of cousins should not be as healthy as the children of any other people. If, on the other hand, such troubles are common in the family, the risks to the offspring are considerable. It is in-breeding from bad stock, and not in-breeding itself, that is a danger. In-breeding may actually be beneficial, and it is the practice of the stock-breeder, once he has secured a good strain, to in-breed as much as possible. No objection, therefore, can possibly be raised to the marriage of cousins, provided their family health record is good.

Many modern writers on the subject of marriage are in favour of a full medical examination of both parties before the proposed marriage is announced. At this examination all questions relating to the marital relationship and parenthood can be discussed. It has even been argued by some enthusiasts that the production of a certificate of medical fitness should be made compulsory before a wedding is solemnized. In spite of the advantages that would result from this, it would be difficult in a democratic country, where personal liberty is so jealously guarded, to make it compulsory. Moreover, so many regulations are already in force and so many certificates have to be obtained that it would be a mistake to encourage a more liberal use of red tape. Our efforts should be directed to rendering a medical overhaul customary whenever any doubts exist as to the health of either party. If one of the two has suffered from one of the illnesses which is known to have an adverse effect on fertility

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such an overhaul becomes still more necessary. Few discoveries are more likely to give rise to subsequent recriminations and difficulties than the realization by a maternally-minded woman that she will never be able to have children because she has married a sterile husband. If she knows this beforehand, and still decides to marry him, she will not be able to excuse him of having deprived her of what she had expected to get out of the marriage.

There is another kind of preparation for marriage that is even more essential than a medical one – namely, a mutual interchange of views and feelings concerning the marriage relationship and the matter of starting a family. Nor is it only on the subject of the sexual side of their union that a mutual understanding must be reached. There are temperaments that, however estimable they may be apart, will never succeed in living together. Havelock Ellis was of the opinion that just as the Catholic Church wisely regards a noviciate as necessary before taking the veil for the cloister, so is a noviciate necessary before exchanging vows in front of the altar of marriage.

The chief obstacle to instituting a noviciate of this kind is that until two people have lived under the same roof, have shared together the ordinary stresses of life, and have seen each other's reactions to these stresses, they are unlikely to know much about each other. Yet to live under such conditions as these would almost inevitably mean to include within the pre-marital noviciate the experience of sexual relationship. The more advanced members of the community are quite prepared that this should be the case, and in some sections of society pre-marital intimacies are considered not only justifiable, but advisable. Nor are such advanced views characteristic only of the intelligentsia of cities, for they have long been held in certain rural districts, where the signal for marriage is either the realization that the two are entirely suited to each other, or else, the advent of pregnancy. Whatever may be the ethical objections to such an arrangement,

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it undoubtedly acts as a safeguard against the contraction of an entirely impossible marriage. It is also the method adopted by many primitive nations. In the islands of Polynesia, unmarried men and girls live together in the communal sleeping-house a life of complete sexual freedom, but for some reason or other, as yet imperfectly understood, the girls very seldom become pregnant. Sooner or later the two sexes begin to tire of temporary sexual unions and to consider the desirability of a more permanent relationship. The interchange of partners becomes less common, and as soon as two people have found that they are suitably mated, and that each enters so much into the other's life that it is difficult to live apart, arrangements are made for marriage. This is a noviciate in the true sense of the word, a real test of compatibility, not only on the sexual, but also on the intellectual and emotional, planes of living. As soon as the marriage has been arranged, gifts are exchanged, a feast is prepared, and the wedding is solemnized in the presence of the tribe. Bidding good-bye to the communal sleeping-house, the young couple acquire a hut of their own as a preliminary step to the founding of a family. Should any girl become pregnant before this stage has been reached, marriage inevitably follows, since the lack of a recognized father is regarded as a stigma to a child. Amongst these islanders, with their particular type of social organization, this method of living appears to work well, and actually to make for the stability of the subsequent marriage.

But the anthropological is not the only approach to this subject. Psychology, economics, and religion, all must have their say in the matter, and in this connexion it must be admitted that all psychologists are not agreed that a trial or noviciate marriage can be looked upon as psychologically sound. Amongst those who are opposed to trial marriage is Crichton-Miller, who writes of it as follows: 'To understand the point of view of the psychologist on the subject of pre-marital intercourse, it will be necessary to understand what

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he means by the "unique relationship of marriage". This relationship is best represented by the conventional picture of a young mother with her baby at her breast and her adoring husband in the background. The picture portrays the most intimate relationship that can exist between three people. Each of the figures represented has to the other a relationship which is unique. If it is to be secure, the selective activities of courtship on the physical, intellectual, and emotional planes must have stopped short of the point at which they begin to encroach on the future partnership. From the most casual kiss to the fullest intercourse, there is a steady gradation towards the sphere of the marriage relationship. A change of convention, whilst it may affect the significance of each gradation, cannot change the rule that if the institution of marriage is to be made secure its special relationship must not be endangered.'

Crichton-Miller goes further than most of his colleagues in his opposition to anything that may endanger the unique relationship of marriage. He is even of the opinion that a man or a woman who has been married before does not obtain from the physical relationship of the second marriage what he or she would have derived had there been no previous experience. Even when the first marriage proved disastrous and the second satisfactory, he believes that the second inevitably suffers from all that has happened before. (This is a statement to which the writer of this book is strongly opposed.) When the reverse is the case, and the first marriage was sexually satisfactory and the second not, the feeling of frustration and disappointment on the side of the partner with experience is very much increased. The verdict, therefore, of Crichton-Miller coincides with that of the moralist. Pre-marital intercourse, although it may be a means of discovering physical suitability, cannot be indulged in except at a high price.

Across the Atlantic what has been called companionate marriage received a great deal of attention ten years ago,

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mainly as the result of the writings of Judge B. B. Lindsey. This advocate of a true noviciate to marriage has, from his experience of adolescents, reached the conclusion that to many people early marriage is a prime necessity. In recommending this measure he insists that he is only advocating what is already an accomplished fact in our civilization – namely, the living together of two young people who have reached the decision that they will live as man and wife without having children until they have discovered whether they are suitably mated.

In a world of compromises it is only natural that there should be those who have reached a compromise in this matter of pre-marital love-making. Many modern young men and women have developed love-making to a point at which it stops just short of complete sexual union. By so doing they have separated those physical intimacies which are normally the prelude to sexual communion from their natural goal, and have thereby made of courtship an end in itself. In the opinion of the writer this is a mischievous compromise – a compromise that may easily be productive of harm. This is more likely to be so in the case of the man. Prolonged sexual excitement without complete gratification – for that is what the activity known as ‘petting’ generally amounts to – is liable to result in a state of nervous tension and of sexual hyperaesthesia. Ernest Groves, an American sexologist, calls this intimate caressing ‘secondary sex expression’, and points out that a girl may so accustom herself to it that she may wish to substitute it for normal sexual union, even after her marriage. On the boy the results are likely to be still worse, and may sometimes lead to the establishment of that troublesome and common complaint, premature ejaculation. The separation of courtship from union and the making of the intimacies, which should only act as a prelude, into an end must be condemned. It is better, if intimacies have gone so far, that they should be normally completed.

Long engagements are to be avoided for the same reason –



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namely, that they are likely to produce a state of chronic sexual stimulation without subsequent gratification. This may cause not only congestion of the genitalia, with physical discomfort, but also severe nervous strain. The sooner this tension is relieved by marriage the better.

One of the points to be settled by an engaged couple is the question of children. In these days most young people talk quite freely on the subject of their future family, so that they know each other's views long before the wedding-day. Although there are some who look upon their marriage more as a source of companionship than as the necessary preliminary to a family, there are few couples who do not look forward with pleasure to the birth, at some time or other, of children. They may not want them immediately, but they want them eventually.

Only the minority are of the opinion that children are not worth the trouble or the expense of having them. If such is their decision, it may well be that no outside advice will have any effect on them. All that can be done is to point out that to embark on marriage with a determination to shirk all its responsibilities carries with it a certain danger. Difficulties in marriage are certainly commoner amongst those who remain deliberately childless, and there are many husbands and wives who live to regret their original decision when it is no longer possible to reverse it.

Nevertheless there are circumstances in which the decision to remain childless is justifiable; an engaged couple may perhaps be no longer girl and boy, and for economical reasons marriage to them may be impossible if it were to be followed by the birth of a child. Still more pressing are health reasons for avoiding a family. To be party to the transmission of inheritable disease is immoral, not only because it inflicts an injury on society, but also because it entails suffering to the future child. In saying this it is not suggested that children should be avoided merely because in one of the parents there exists some small departure from normality. The eugenic age

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has not yet arrived, and it is indeed doubtful whether it will ever arrive, if for no other reason than that it is difficult to decide what are the qualities desirable in a race, and what are undesirable. There can, however, be no difference of opinion concerning a child's right to demand of its parents reasonable health, freedom from congenital disease, and a normal level of mentality. If a child be born a helpless cripple, the legatee of a congenital disease, a deaf mute, or a mentally defective child, he will be entitled to bear a grudge against those who brought him into the world. Writing of this subject so long ago as 1892, Strachan expressed himself as follows: 'It is too much to expect, just at present, but the day when such a law will appear on the Statute Book is fast approaching. The divine right of kings to govern, once as firmly fixed as any canon of the church, has disappeared before the onward march of education and enlightenment, and so shall what some are pleased to call the divine right of procreation.'

Strachan was either too optimistic about the march of education and enlightenment, or else he did not realize that the human race is capable of moving backwards as well as forwards. Not only is there no indication that we are any nearer embarking on the compulsory sterilization of the unfit, but we continue to put difficulties in the way of the unfit who of their own free will desire to avoid bringing defective children into the world.

It is a strange thought that although the idea of a child's duty to his parents has long been a preoccupation of the human race, the conception of the parents' duty to their children is of comparatively recent origin. Men and women who would be shocked at the idea that they were capable of wittingly injuring anybody, sometimes do not hesitate to run the risk of deeply injuring a child. Formerly Nature would have corrected their errors by the working of her inexorable law of the survival only of the fittest, but by interfering with those laws we are succeeding in saving the cripple and the

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imbecile. Surely if it is ethical to interfere with one law of Nature it is ethical also to interfere with another, and ensure that if the unfit marry they shall not produce defective children.

So far we have only considered one eventuality – namely, marriage from which, for one reason or another, the possibility of children has deliberately been excluded. It is also advisable to say a few words about a childlessness that is not deliberate, but involuntary. This is particularly necessary, on account of the many erroneous ideas which exist on the subject of infertility and sterility. •

Involuntary childlessness is far commoner than is usually supposed, and although it is obviously impossible to produce exact statistics, owing to the widespread use of contraceptives, it is probable that about one in every ten married couples in this country are childless through no wish of their own. There are also some reasons for believing that infertility is on the increase amongst the more highly civilized peoples, and that what the opponents of birth control have put down to the harmfulness of contraceptives is in great part due to a general decline in fertility. Amongst married people contraceptives are usually employed for the purpose of limiting their families, and not of avoiding children altogether. Whilst, therefore, birth-control is often responsible for the single-child family, it is not usually responsible for the complete absence of children.

Another misconception that it is necessary to dispel is that there exists any direct relationship between fertility and the strength of sexuality. This confusion of virility with fertility is very common, and it should be realized that it is possible for a man to be nearly impotent and at the same time highly fertile, or sterile and yet very highly sexed. The same may be said of women; fertility and sexuality are entirely different entities. It is also a mistake to think that an absence of children is generally the result of one party (usually the woman) being completely sterile. More often than not it is due to infertility factors on both sides.

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If, therefore, after a year of married life with frequent intercourse no pregnancy has occurred, a married couple, desirous of a family, would do well to take medical advice. Attention to even one small obstacle to conception may make all the difference between success and failure, and for this reason it is of the utmost importance that not only the wife but also the husband should submit to examination.

The question is sometimes asked whether, if one or both parents have passed their prime, the health of the children is likely to suffer. No general answer can be given to this question except that it can naturally be assumed that, other things being equal, the children of the young have a better chance of being born robust than those of middle-aged or elderly parents. Provided the mother be reasonably young, the age of the father will have less influence and because fertility in the female drops steeply in the late thirties, it is unlikely that children will be born to parents who have both passed the prime of life. It must also be borne in mind that whereas the capacity of a woman to conceive ceases abruptly at the menopause, a man may retain the power to procreate to the end of his life.

*The Results of Artificial Insemination.* – Since the publication of the first edition of this book artificial insemination has become a practical proposition, and this new procedure has provoked much controversy. It must first be pointed out that insemination may be of two kinds; insemination with the husband's semen, or A.I.H., and insemination with donated semen, otherwise known as A.I.D. The former is usually undertaken when the husband is fertile but is suffering from incurable impotence. The latter is resorted to only when he is hopelessly sterile. Both of these methods are remarkably successful when carried out by an expert.

It is natural that the Churches should be seriously concerned with the use and the abuse of these methods and should have set up various commissions to study the problem. In the opinion of the Catholic Church neither of these

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methods are permissible; in that of the Protestant Church only the former. It is unnecessary to discuss the reasons for their coming to these decisions, for this book is not primarily concerned with religion and ethics. If insemination is contrary to the teaching of the Churches it is right that this should be made known. But unfortunately some of the opponents of insemination have not been content to condemn it only on moral grounds. Instead of confining themselves to the plain statement that the insemination of a wife with donated semen is immoral and must therefore be forbidden, they have weakened their case by inventing spurious arguments against it. It has been said, for example, that it has a bad psychological effect on both husband and wife and thereby jeopardizes the safety of the marriage. Now if there is one statement on this subject that can be made with assurance it is that A.I.D. has been the means of saving many childless marriages. Instead of driving the husband and wife apart, it has drawn them together. Need we be surprised at this? A husband who has put aside his own selfish feelings and by doing so has allowed of his wife's having what she wants more than anything else in the world, a child, is strengthening and not weakening the marriage bond. So also does the presence of a child in the hitherto childless home increase the stability of the marriage.

It is quite possible that the Churches are right in condemning insemination on moral grounds – it is conceivable that the happiness of a man and woman may be purchasable at too great a cost – but a moralist also has the obligation to be honest. Insemination is more likely to save than to ruin a childless marriage. It is an untruth to condemn insemination on psychological grounds.

## CHAPTER 10

### DIVORCE

**IF** the State shows but little interest in the health and economic conditions under which two people marry, it at any rate evinces a great interest in the conditions under which they separate. A mentally deficient man and woman, living on the dole, may marry with the greatest ease, but two intelligent people who have decided after long consideration that their marriage is a failure, and that it would be better for them to part, are not able to do so unless they are willing to stage a quarrel and commit adultery. This is what the law requires, and this is what the law gets.

Divorce laws vary greatly in different countries, but have in common the qualities of being archaic and chaotic. This is especially so in America, where a man can divorce and remarry in one State and then, proceeding across the border, find that in the adjoining State he is looked upon as having contracted a bigamous union. Yet, in spite of the fact that everybody, and none more than the lawyer, recognizes the ridiculous state of affairs, every attempt to produce order out of chaos is met with the fiercest and most uncompromising opposition. This is to a great extent due to the dogged hostility of the Church to all reforms of the divorce laws.

In the more primitive countries divorce is looked upon as a matter of mutual arrangement. Writing of marriage and divorce in Samoa, Dr W. Richmond states that 'when a husband or wife tires of the other, he or she simply withdraws from the household and goes home, and the marriage is said to have "passed away" without much ado; neither husband nor wife considers it any virtue to attempt to maintain a relationship in which there is much unhappiness. If the wife leaves, the husband may go after her and attempt to persuade her to return, or he may snap his fingers and seek

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another wife forthwith. We must remember that the primitive is far from sharing our sentiments towards marriage; it is to him a matter of convenience, or pride, or conformity to tribal custom.'

When we turn from these more primitive forms of culture, and examine our own divorce laws from the historical point of view, we make an interesting discovery. They were framed primarily as a means of settling the disposition of property, the position of the accused party in any suit for support or inheritance, and the right of the father or mother to possess the children. Legal divorce, therefore, was instituted solely for the purpose of safeguarding property. In marrying each other a man and woman had entered into a legal contract, and in divorcing each other they had broken that contract. Provision had therefore to be made for this breach of faith.

During the Middle Ages the Church acquired control over the institution of marriage, and converted what had only been a legal contract into a sacrament, and a sacrament that could not be broken in any circumstances whatever. Divorce, as a result, became an evil, and every obstacle was put in the way of those who sought it. But it would be unjust to suggest that the intervention of the Church and its conversion of a legal contract into a sacrament has been without benefit to society. A religious sanction is the most powerful of all sanctions because it operates quite independently of human beings. An unfaithful wife or husband may fly to the ends of the earth but the eye of heaven still watches everything. The religious sanction has been designed to ensure the cooperation of both parties to the marriage by enlisting the aid of forces which penetrated more deeply and are more binding than any legal contract can be. It must be acknowledged that the Church has done much in the past to preserve intact an institution which is vitally necessary to society, the institution of marriage. Whether it will succeed in preserving it in the future now that its influence is at such a low ebb remains to be seen.

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The traditional view of the Church has determined the nature of all our divorce laws and has made it impossible for two people to separate by mutual agreement. An unforgivable sin had to be committed by one of the partners before they could part, and to the Church only one type of sin seemed sufficient for this purpose – adultery. This at any rate was sufficient in the case of the woman, but not in that of the man. In order that the wife might be able to claim divorce from her husband it had formerly to be proved that he had committed an incestuous adultery, or adultery with bigamy, or adultery with rape, or merely adultery coupled with desertion for two years or upwards. This unfair treatment of the two sexes was, however, altered by the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1923, when simple adultery was made sufficient in both cases. Finally, with consummate skill and patience, Mr A. P. Herbert steered through the troubled waters of the House of Commons his Matrimonial Causes Bill of 1937, and although every attempt was made to wreck it, he eventually brought it, with the loss of only a few of its original clauses, into harbour. This Act incorporated the recommendations of a previous Royal Commission, and accepted as additional grounds for divorce desertion for three years, cruelty, habitual drunkenness involving cruelty, incurable insanity, and life-long imprisonment. It also added a new condition that no petition could be filed within three years of the date of marriage.

As had been the case on previous occasions on which efforts had been made to alter the divorce laws, the die-hard opponents of reform closed their ranks in an unsuccessful attempt to wreck the Bill. Whatever the private feelings of a Catholic might be, he was bound, on general principles, to oppose it.

Nevertheless the third reading of the Bill in the House of Lords revealed a singular lack of agreement amongst the Churches. The Nonconformist Churches gave the Bill a favourable reception, whilst the Catholic Church, under the



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leadership of Lord Russell of Killowen, maintained its traditional hostility to reform. The Archbishop of Canterbury balanced himself skilfully, and at the same time with considerable dignity, on the fence, and the Bishops of Durham and of Ipswich spoke courageously in favour of reform. The Bishop of St Albans and Lord Cecil maintained the traditional Church attitude, but unavailingly, for, in spite of the efforts of the wreckers, the Bill passed by seventy-nine votes to twenty-eight.

The opposition of the Churches to divorce law reform is natural and logical. Holding as they do that marriage is indissoluble in the sight of God, neither party can have, during the lifetime of the other, sexual relations with another person, no matter what may have happened to the marriage. Protestants adopt a less intransigent attitude than do Catholics, chiefly because they realize that the indissolubility of a hopeless marriage inevitably encourages adultery. Consequently it happens that in Protestant countries which admit of divorce, adultery is viewed with disfavour, while in Catholic countries, where divorce is impossible, adultery, although considered sinful, is generally winked at.

Outside the Churches opposition to divorce law reform arises from the fear that the facilitating of divorce will inevitably lead to the weakening of the institution of marriage. This fear is not justified. Marriages are destroyed long before they reach the Divorce Courts and divorce merely endorses the fact that the marriage is at an end. Attempts to mend smashed marriages by means of an external ring of iron never have, and never will, meet with any success. The actual result achieved in America by tightening up the divorce laws was to increase the frequency of divorce till it reached the appalling rate of one in every six marriages. In Sweden, on the other hand, where a marriage can be dissolved by mutual consent, divorces are six times less frequent than they are in America.

As Bertrand Russell has pointed out, one of the most

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curious things about divorce is the difference which has often existed between law and custom. Even although the law may allow of divorce, public opinion may disapprove of it. As has already been shown, the country with the easiest divorce laws does not necessarily produce the highest divorce statistics. Public opinion often acts as a better brake on facile divorce than does legislation. In China, before the recent upheavals, divorce was almost unknown, for, in spite of the example of Confucius, it was not considered quite respectable to be divorced. •

If we accept the view which was previously expressed, that marriage was instituted primarily for the sake of the children, the welfare of the family must be the chief consideration whenever divorce is contemplated. This, however, can scarcely be said to be encouraged by our present divorce laws. Any amicable discussion between the parents as to what is best for themselves and their family amounts to collusion, and collusion renders a subsequent divorce impossible.

Laws that are out of harmony with public opinion will never prove effective. What actually happens when the law and public opinion are opposed to each other is that the law is brought into contempt, as was amply proved in America prior to the repeal of Prohibition. Salvation for marriage lies in an entirely different direction. If recourse to the Divorce Courts is to be made less common, efforts to save a marriage must be made *before* and not *after* it is broken. This is indeed so obvious that for the last ten years people who are exercised about the frequency of divorce have been urging that some sort of machinery for conciliation should be set up. In 1935 a Summary Jurisprudence (Domestic Procedure) Bill was presented in the House of Lords, but it was unfortunately withdrawn at the conclusion of the second reading. This Bill sought to establish separate courts for dealing with domestic relations before a special panel of justices. Mr Claud Mullins, the well-known London magis-

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trate, has advocated similar reforms, and has urged that domestic cases in the police courts should be conducted on lines of conciliation rather than of legislation. Men and women should be encouraged to bring their private differences to these reformed domestic courts, so that an attempt may be made to resolve them, before they have become so grave as to necessitate divorce.

In this effort to adjust what in the beginning may only be a trifling difference of opinion, before it has become so grave as to cause irreparable damage, lies the best hope of reducing the incidence of divorce. Such work would, of course, have to be done by specially qualified magistrates, who had the power to call in to their aid such specialists as psychologists and medical men with experience of sexual problems. Should all efforts to attain adjustment fail, then if, in the opinion of the magistrate, the situation seemed hopeless, a divorce should be obtainable by mutual consent. Before such a divorce were granted it would be necessary that certain safeguards should be provided for by the legal authority. He would first of all have to be satisfied that the divorce was really by the willing consent of both parties, and that no adjustment of difficulties was any longer possible. Secondly, he would have to make certain that the interests, financial and otherwise, of both parties had been safeguarded; and thirdly, ensure that satisfactory arrangements had been made for the custody, upbringing, and welfare of the children. Finally, careful consideration would have to be given to cases in which for reasons of pecuniary advantage or personal spite one party refused consent.

Obvious though this remedy for present difficulties is, it is unlikely that any further reform of our divorce laws will be achieved for many years to come. No Government cares to run the risk of burning its fingers and losing valuable votes over such a ticklish matter as marriage or divorce. The statesman who is bold enough to tackle the problem will have to face an amazingly complicated situation. He will have to

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look upon marriage not as a sacred ethical obligation to which everything must be sacrificed, but as a social contrivance, primarily invented for the safeguarding of the family. He will have to point out that a marriage that has lost its inward and spiritual grace retains as little sanctity as a sacrament taken only with the lips and not with the heart. He will have to go even further, and support the view that the most important thing to the State is that healthy children should be born. This being so, one healthy illegitimate child is worth more to the State than ten defective legitimate children. Consequently the penalizing of healthy illegitimate children and the welcoming of mentally deficient and unwanted children only because they happen to be legitimate ceases to make sense. Finally, he will have to protest that, all attempts to mend broken marriages by making divorce difficult having failed, it may well be worth our while to pay more attention to the beginnings of matrimonial disharmony and less to the final stages of it.

What statesman will take upon his shoulders such a task? In Mr Bernard Shaw's words, a man who faces the House of Commons with a message like this 'will be posted on every hoarding and denounced in every opposition paper, especially in the sporting papers, as the destroyer of the home, the family, of decency, of morality, of chastity, and what not. . . . Under such circumstances it is not to be wondered at that the mere mention of the marriage question makes a British Cabinet shiver with apprehension and hastily pass on to safer business.'

Since, therefore, there is little chance of any early reform of the laws that deal with sex and marriage, we can only hope, with Bertrand Russell, that public opinion will become so enlightened that the lot of those who have committed a technical offence against them will grow less burdensome. Marriage has no magic to make a sexual relationship either moral or immoral; it can merely make it legal. That which sanctifies a physical union is not the clergyman or the

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registraſ, but love itſelf. So alſo is it with the product of marriage – children.

Marriage was inſtituted for the ſake of the children and if it is a failure and has to be brought to an end, the intereſts of the children muſt always be the firſt conſideration. What will the effect of the parting of the parents be on them? Would it not be better that the ſeparation ſhould be poſtponed a little longer or are they of an age to underſtand what has happened? Theſe are the kind of queſtions huſband and wife have to aſk themſelves before they agree to ſet in motion the clumsy machinery of the law. Agree? – does the law permit of any agreement? It does not, but an enlightened public opinion does. As the ſervants of the law are privately ſympathetic with public opinion, though outwardly ſtrictly professional, and as they are quite willing to take their cue from the oſtriches, the neceſſary arrangements can uſually be made. Great emphasis has been placed on the deſtroying effect on the young of broken marriages and it is quite true that they can cauſe much ſuffering to children. But it is not divorce that is reſponſible for this, but the fact that the marriage has been broken and the feeling of inſecurity which this produces in the home. Children are very ſenſitive to atmosphere and however carefully the parents try to maintain an outward appearance of friendlineſs, they ſoon become aware of the underlying tenſion. It is often better that the parents ſhould agree to live apart, meeting only occaſionally when family buſineſs has to be diſcuſſed, than that children ſhould be brought up in an atmosphere heavily charged by the ſecret bickerings of their parents.

## CHAPTER 11

### SEXUAL DEVIATIONS

It was formerly taken for granted that there existed but one pattern for sexuality. This seemed so obvious that it was not even necessary to define the standard of sexual behaviour; everyone was supposed to know it instinctively, and he who departed from it was of necessity vicious. Only when we examine more closely the sexual make-up and the behaviour of different men and women do we see that this ancient and traditional assumption is a mistaken one. Instead of there being a single standard of sex-life, it would be nearer the truth to say that there are as many standards as there are individuals.

Nevertheless, even although there be no standard model of behaviour, it is necessary to possess some criterion by means of which to judge whether a sex-pattern may be regarded as normal or abnormal. Havelock Ellis has stated that 'in order to remain within the normal range, all variations must at some point include the procreative end for which sex exists.' Interpreted too literally, this definition would exclude from being considered normal sexual intercourse associated with the use of contraceptives. This is obviously an absurdity, so that it is necessary to re-word his phrase and state that 'all sexual activities that are entirely and by preference outside the range in which procreation is possible may be deemed abnormal'. This would, of course, exclude from being considered normal all homosexual practices.

The word 'deviation' has now replaced 'perversion' in scientific literature, since the latter term was used at a time when all sexual anomalies were regarded as deliberate sins. This attitude to abnormal sexual behaviour still exists

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amongst the ignorant, and ignorance of the nature of sex is by no means confined to the illiterate classes. A well-known bishop who interested himself actively in moral welfare society proclaimed that 'the unspeakable vice of homosexuality must be stamped out', thereby advertising the fact that he had not even taken the trouble to acquaint himself with the modern views on sex before tackling the problem of homosexuality. Therefore, in order to get away from all terms that carry with them a moral judgement, the word 'deviation' has been generally adopted as a description of sexual anomalies.

Another term that is used frequently in sex pathology is the word 'symbolism'. By 'erotic symbolism' (or sometimes 'erotic fetishism') is meant a condition 'in which the psychological sexual process is either changed or deviated in such a way that some special part of the process, or some object or action normally on its margin, or even outside it altogether, becomes the chief focus of attention. What is to the normal lover of secondary importance, or even indifferent, thus becomes of primary importance, and may properly be said to be the symbol of the whole sexual process' (Havelock Ellis).

In a sense all sexual deviations may be considered to be examples of erotic symbolism, for in every case it will be found that some object or act, that for other people has little or no erotic value, has assumed a fictitious importance. It is, however, to that curious condition in which some part of the body (the hand or the foot), some garment (gloves, shoes, corsets, underclothes), or some activity (whipping, cruelty, exhibitionism) arouses an intense sexual excitement that the term symbolism or fetishism is most appropriately applied.

It is not our intention to survey the whole range of sexual pathology. This is a subject for specialists, and is outside the scope of this work. Only a few of the commoner and better-known sexual deviations will be described so that we may gain some insight into the origin of sexual abnormalities and

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some idea of the attitude we should adopt to them. It may of course be objected that the subject of sexual deviations belongs to the psychology of sex rather than to the subject with which this book is primarily concerned, its physiology. But the division which Descartes made between the mind and the body is an artificial one. Mind and body are so inextricably interwoven that the physiology and the psychology of sex must be treated as one. It is true that in any discussion of the various causes responsible for sexual deviations mental factors are contrasted with bodily, or somatic, factors, but this separation is only made for convenience of presentation. Body and mind are inseparable and should be regarded as being different aspects of the same entity.

*Sadism and Masochism.* – Sadism is generally defined as sexual emotion associated with the desire to inflict pain, physical or moral, on the object of the emotion; masochism is sexual emotion associated with the desire to be physically subjugated and morally humiliated by the person arousing the emotion. Sadism and masochism are therefore the active and passive forms of the same preoccupation with pain, or, as Freud has put it, 'masochism is sadism turned round on itself.' Frequently they are found associated, and even the famous Marquis de Sade was not a pure sadist, but a man who revealed in himself elements of masochism.

Contrary to what might be expected, the sadist is not usually a robust, aggressive type of person, or the masochist a weak and timid individual. Actually, the exact reverse is generally the case: the sadist is more often the timid person, and the masochist robust and masculine. A sadist youth who had had voluptuous ideas connected with blood since childhood, and finally killed a boy, was described by Lacassagne as timid, modest, deeply religious, and with a hatred of all obscenity and immorality. But the love of blood was an irresistible obsession with him, that finally landed him in a criminal asylum.

The linking up of sexuality with cruelty and humiliation,



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either inflicted or suffered, is less difficult to explain than would at first sight appear. It must be remembered that in a mild degree pain and suffering, whether witnessed in others or experienced in themselves, can for many people of a neurotic temperament evoke a pleasurable psychic state. Strange to say, humanity loves its suffering. It is the Grand Guignol type of play that fills the theatre; it is the tragedy on the newspaper placard that sells the paper. Lucretius was aware of this fact when he wrote, 'It is sweet to contemplate from the shore, the perils of the unhappy sailor struggling with death.' It is only too evident that what may be regarded as an element of sadism and masochism exists in most people, and consequently it is easy to explain the linking up of the emotion created by suffering with sexual activity.

There is undoubtedly an element of cruelty in the courtship of animals. Particularly is this so in the case of birds, when the male at mating times falls into a state of sexual frenzy, whilst the more passive female suffers. The idea that some element of cruelty enters into human love-making is both widespread and of long standing. Lucian puts into the mouth of a woman these words: 'He who has not rained blows on his mistress, and torn her hair and her garments, is not yet in love,' while in one of Cervantes' novels a woman, in talking of her husband, complains that 'he does not know how to make me suffer a little. One cannot love a man who does not make one suffer a little.'

It must be remembered that a sadist has no desire to be cruel; all that he wants is to profit by the emotion aroused by the spectacle of cruelty so as to make good his own lack of sexual feeling. He is almost always a weakly-sexed man who is under the necessity of stimulating his flagging powers by the only method that is available to him. It is for that reason that he inflicts his wounds on parts of the body that are clearly visible to him, and which are likely to bleed, such as the neck or abdomen. In the same way the masochist has no primary desire to suffer, but suffering and humiliation

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supply him with the emotion that alone makes sexual activity possible. Strange to say, although it is the female who plays the more passive part in coitus, and although it is she who is more likely to suffer, the masochist is almost always a man. He may attain his end in a variety of ways, such as by binding himself until he is almost strangled. Not infrequently a naked youth is found trussed up like a fowl with cords, and dead from suffocation. Is it murder or suicide? It is neither. The explanation of this seemingly inexplicable tragedy is that a masochistic youth has been attempting to obtain solitary sexual satisfaction by the only means at his disposal.

*Fetishism.* – In fetishism there is a shifting of sexual emphasis from the totality of the beloved one to some small part of her, to some single anatomical attribute, to a piece of clothing belonging to her, or to some article connected with her only by chance association. Fetishism is almost entirely a masculine deviation and it is very rarely met with in women. It is a gross exaggeration of a normal instinct in sexual love, namely, the disposition of the lover to single out for praise some quality in the beloved. Poets have written odes to their mistresses' eyebrows, lips, or hair and nobody would accuse them of sexual deviation in doing so. But when some single feature takes precedence of the personality as a whole, or when rapture is elicited by something associated purely by accident with a woman, the normal becomes the abnormal. Strange to say, the commonest forms of fetishism are concerned with such unaesthetic articles as rubber sheets and gloves and with the experience of being constricted. The latter explains those curious coroner's cases where a youth is found to have bound himself up with cords and by doing so to have strangled himself. He has tied himself up because only thus could he obtain complete sexual satisfaction. Mild forms of fetishism yield readily to treatment but the severer cases may be resistant to it.

*Transvestism or Eonism.* – This is a puzzling condition which is different from homosexuality although it is some-

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times associated with it. Hirschfeld first described this particular sex deviation, which he recognized as being distinct from inversion. He gave it the name of transvestism, a term which is descriptive of one of its symptoms, namely the urgent desire of the transvestite to dress up in the clothes of the opposite sex. Havélock Ellis regards the term as unsatisfactory because it lays too much emphasis on the longing to masquerade as a member of the opposite sex which is only one of the attributes of this 'sexo-aesthetic inversion'. He suggests, as an alternative, the term eonism.

The word eonism, like the word sadism, has been derived from an historical character, in this case from the Chevalier d'Eon de Beaumont, who lived during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (1728-1810). The Chevalier, a member of a well-known Burgundian family acted as a diplomatic agent for Louis XV. He died in London in 1810 and it was only then that the person whom everybody in London had always taken for a woman, was found to be a well-developed male. This intense desire to live as a member of the other sex may affect both men and women. Other good examples of the condition in women are provided by Lady Hester Stanhope and by James Barry. The latter was a distinguished medical 'man' who ended a long and honourable career as Senior Inspector General of the English Army Medical Department. It was only after his death that the true sex of General Barry became known. There is no reason to believe that any of the women mentioned above were homosexuals. On the contrary all the evidence is in favour of their desires having been entirely normal.

Transvestism is a far commoner condition than was formerly believed and it probably comes next to homosexuality in frequency. Two other things may be said about it, the first that little is known about its causation and the second that it is exceedingly difficult to treat. I am told that a small coterie of these unhappy people often meet together in London and that an outsider at one of these reunions would

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be hard put to it to decide the sex of its various members, some being dressed in accordance with their actual sex and others in harmony with their desires.

Yet many who suffer from transvestism appear outwardly to be completely normal and their burning desire to belong to the opposite sex is entirely unsuspected by their friends. Some of them even marry and have children, but when they do so their inner secret longings usually become known to their marriage partners. Although male eunuchs do not necessarily desire homosexual relationships, they often have a longing for a woman's experiences of pregnancy and motherhood.

As was the case in homosexuality, two types of explanation of the condition have been offered; the first that it is the result of a defective endocrine balance and the second that it is psychogenic. It is probable that both of these factors play a part in its production and that their relative importance varies in different cases.

Amongst the writer's own patients, most of them males longing to be females, there have been many different types of men: some have been slight, delicately featured young men, gentle and diffident in character, youths who in feminine clothes would have been accepted as young women. Others have been robust and masculine in appearance who would have attracted attention and comment had they dressed as they desired to dress. The following is a typical history of the first type of male transvestite:

Mr X, aged thirty, is an artist by profession. As far back as he can remember, he has always wanted to be a girl and whenever he was given the chance to do so he dressed himself up in girls' clothes. Only then did he feel happy and at his ease. He can remember an incident that happened when he was an infant lying on his nurse's knees after a bath, 'Why you might be a little girl,' his nurse murmured in his ear as she dried him. This was exactly what he wanted to be even then, and he recalls how happy he was for a whole week

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after this incident. The desire grew stronger as he became older. He heartily disliked the things his fellow schoolboys liked and preferred instead girlish occupations, a preference which did not make school life easier for him. As a youth he had no sexual feelings towards either sex. At the age of twenty-four, and in spite of the absence of real sexual desire, he married, in all probability because he had found a capable and affectionate girl who was eager to look after him. Two children were born and outwardly he and his wife appeared to be a contented and happily married couple. But he was very far from being happy, for the desire to be a woman was as strong as ever in him, so strong at times that it became unbearable. When their elder child was five years old, his wife asked him to cease dressing himself up in female clothes in the privacy of home, as he had formerly done. She did this with good reason believing that it would be confusing for the child to see his father in woman's attire. One night he attacked his right testicle with pointed scissors, with the vague intention of castrating himself, and of thus bringing about the first stage in his transformation into a woman. When he was admitted into hospital, the testicle was found to be so badly damaged that it had to be removed. A short course of psychotherapy was tried but without any benefit to the patient. Every now and then his longing to be of the opposite sex becomes intense, but, so far, he has refrained from injuring himself again. His chief comfort lies in the hope that eventually he will find a surgeon willing and able to convert him into a woman. Life would be intolerable for him but for two things, his interest in his art, for which he has considerable talent, and the remarkable understanding of his wife.

The psychic explanation offered by Havelock Ellis is that 'the eonist is embodying in an extreme degree the aesthetic attitude of imitation of, and identification with, the admired object. It is normal for a man to identify himself with the woman he loves. The eonist carried that identification too

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far, stimulated by a sensitive and feminine element in himself, which is associated with a rather defective virile sexuality on what may be a neurotic basis.' •

The truth is that the medical profession knows very little about this strange condition and can offer very little help to those afflicted by it. The word afflicted has been deliberately chosen, for many transvestites suffer severely. Some male transvestites, in their blind reaction against Nature's cruel decree that they must live as men, have even attacked their external genitalia in the hope that they would manage to castrate themselves. Others have gone from surgeon to surgeon in the hope that they would eventually find one willing and skilful enough to convert them into women by means of plastic surgery. That indeed is the hope to which they all turn in moments of despair – that some day a surgeon will correct Nature's hideous mistake so that they will no longer have to be 'a female soul imprisoned with a male body.'

*Surgery and Transvestism.* – The obstacles standing in the way of the surgical treatment of transvestism are formidable. In the first place there are few surgeons capable of carrying out the series of plastic operations required to bring about an external change of sex. In the second place many of those who now clamour for surgical treatment would hastily withdraw their candidature if they were to be told precisely what it entailed. In the third place the legality of the conversion operation is debatable.

Nevertheless a few of these people have, by their impetuosity and their determination, managed to get these operations carried out successfully. One of them, a fighter-pilot of the late war, appears to be supremely satisfied with the result. On being asked whether she had not suffered from all the many operations to which she had been submitted, she replied: 'It was nothing compared with the suffering with which I had to contend previously, before I managed to get anything done.'

It would seem, therefore, that the hopes placed by trans-

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vestites on surgery are not so extravagant or so misplaced as they at first sight appear to be. Because no form of psychotherapy or endocrine therapy affords the patient any lasting relief, surgery would seem to have some place, though a very limited one, in the treatment of this obstinate and distressing condition. It must be borne in mind that all that the surgeon manages to do if he consents to operate on these cases is to change the secondary sex characteristics and the external genitalia so that the patient may be able to live the kind of life he or she is anxious to live. Sex is genetically determined and this cannot be altered. Another point requiring emphasis is that there is no reason to believe that conism is an indication that the patient comes from a degenerate stock. The mentality of many of these severely handicapped people is well above the average level, and some are particularly distinguished members of their profession. Now that all the professions and almost all the male occupations are open also to women, it is quite likely that the need for surgical treatment in female conism will become less. But there seems no reason why there should be any corresponding fall in the case of male conists.

The law shows as little understanding of transvestism or conism as it does of other deviations of sex. If a male, of any age, is found dressed in female clothes, he is promptly arrested and charged with masquerading for improper purposes. If he endeavours to qualify for wearing female clothes by undergoing a serious operation, the law again steps in to forbid it on the grounds that it is of a mutilating character. Yet a woman is fully entitled to wear whatever clothes she likes or, should she prefer this, no clothes at all. When doctors are able to do as little for patients as we doctors can manage to do for the more distressing cases of transvestism, it would perhaps be better for us to make efforts in another direction. Instead of treating the patients themselves, we might treat with more profit the society which makes it so difficult for these unfortunate people to live. In time – but

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many years will be required for this – a society which at present looks upon these strange afflictions of their fellow men with loathing, hatred, and horror may become sufficiently educated to look upon them with compassion. Or is this too much to expect of nations which claim to follow the teachings of Christ?

*Exhibitionism.* – This provides a good example of a symbolistic manifestation of the sexual impulse. The exhibitionist finds an adequate equivalent to coitus by the simple means of exhibiting his sexual organs to a member of the opposite sex.

A child often shows pleasure in displaying his nakedness, but this may be considered a natural and entirely innocent phenomenon. Occasionally adolescents may show the same tendency, and even this may be of no special psychological significance. It is only when an adult obtains erotic satisfaction in this way, and substitutes it for normal intercourse, that the display of nakedness must be regarded as pathological.

Exhibitionism is the commonest of all sexual misdemeanours, and it is exclusively confined to men. Norwood East reports that out of 291 sexual prisoners received for trial, or on remand at Brixton Prison, 101 were accused of 'indecent exposure'. The exhibitionist is satisfied with the mere act of self-exhibition and with the emotional reaction which it produces; he practically never assaults the woman to whom he exposes himself, and rarely approaches her or attempts to molest her. He does not even appear to be sexually excited by the act. Sometimes he is completely impotent, and sometimes merely weakly sexed. Exhibitionism, therefore, is not the result of an exuberance of sexuality, but of a sexual debility.

The exhibitionist chooses a feminine witness, so that in the shock of sexual shame by which she reacts he may find a gratifying similitude of the normal emotions of coitus. He feels that by means of his act he has effected a kind of psychic defloration of the victim of his outrage. Usually the exhibitionist is a shy, timid person, so that the impulsive action to



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which he has given way is utterly opposed to his ordinary behaviour. The violent emotion that he experiences in behaving in such a manner is heightened still further by the reaction produced in the witness of his indecency. There may also be an element of vanity in his exposure, the desire of a weak, conceited man to produce the maximum impression on his fellows. Hence the favourite choice of a crowded church for the performance of the act. In seeking such a *mise en scène* the exhibitionist has no sacrilegious intent. All that he desires is to produce the maximum emotional effect on himself and on his audience.

Unfortunately it is no easy task to deal satisfactorily with these miserable cases. Havelock Ellis quotes the following passage from a letter received from a magistrate who happened to be both a physician and a psychologist: 'I have seen a good many such cases on the Bench; they are very sad indeed. Some I have managed to get off; others had to take their punishment according to the law. There is no doubt that the majority need psycho-therapeutic treatment, being mental cases rather than criminal offenders. Many are genuinely horrified at their own practice, which they strenuously try to control. Much propaganda is necessary in this matter to effect a change in the conventional outlook.'

Somewhat allied to exhibitionism is the strange urge to throw ink on a woman's white dress, or to commit some similar outrage that will produce in the victim of the assault a violent emotional reaction. Such apparently senseless behaviour is by no means uncommon. Another form of sexual attack for which a man may find himself in the dock is the cutting off of female hair. Both the slinging of ink and the cutting off of hair may be regarded as symbolic actions. The white spotless garment of the woman represents the primary fetish, the throwing of ink on it the subsequent defilement or defloration. The strong emotional reaction produced by the outrage reproduces in the sexual neurotic the emotional atmosphere associated with coitus.

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The hair-despoiler's passion is very easily explained. Human hair is a common fetish; for the hair of the beloved is the feature that is the most universally noted apart from her eyes. Moreover, the attraction of hair is often felt very early in life, although the morbid impulse to despoil it may only be developed later. Such intense sexual excitement may be aroused by touching or cutting off female hair that ejaculation is provoked. As a rule there is no sadistic element in the cutter's act; he is a pure fetishist who intends no harm to his victim. The despoiler is not an ill-intentioned man, in spite of the annoyance he causes. On medical examination he will usually be found to be of a nervous temperament and to come from a family subject to nervous breakdowns, alcoholism, and other manifestations of nervous instability.

## CHAPTER 12

### THE PROBLEM OF HOMOSEXUALITY

HOMOSEXUALITY is so little understood by the public that even to-day it is difficult to discuss it without running the risk of arousing either hostility, facetiousness, or embarrassment. Yet homosexuality is not only the most clearly defined of all the sexual deviations, but it is by far the commonest of them. It is as prevalent amongst animals as it is amongst men. Goethe wrote of it that it was as old as humanity itself and could be considered natural, and he was justified in saying this. Homosexuality is not only normal behaviour amongst animals but it was and still is accepted as natural by many civilizations. The ancient Greeks regarded homosexual practices as useful in that they provided an outlet for youthful desire. They looked upon it as a phase of sexual development which would come to an end when full maturity had been reached. The average age of marriage in ancient Greece was in the neighbourhood of thirty, an age at which a man had completed his military training and other state obligations and was entitled to settle down.

Western civilization disapproves of homosexual practices in both the male and the female and it is entitled to do so on the grounds that homosexuality is a sign of sexual immaturity. But no nation which has adopted a severe attitude to homosexuality is justified either in pretending that it is a rarity, or in regarding it as an unspeakable vice when examples of it are brought to its notice. The position must be honestly faced that in spite of stern public disapproval and of the vindictive punishment meted out to offenders, it is widespread amongst all Western nations. Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martin state that 37 per cent of American youths have experienced at least one homosexual contact and that if older unmarried men up to the age of thirty-

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five are included in the survey, the percentage rises as high as fifty. The fact must therefore be accepted that homosexual practices are common and that they are likely to remain so. This being so, the subject has to be reviewed as dispassionately as any other form of human behaviour. For the present only homosexuality in the male will be discussed.

*The Male Homosexual.* – As has already been said, Goethe's statement that homosexual behaviour is natural is supported both by human history and by observations made on animals. Not only do young monkeys indulge in this form of sexual expression, but so also do adult males who have already established heterosexual coitus. G. V. Hamilton reports that all immature male monkeys pass through a period of being overtly and exclusively homosexual, a period which generally comes to an end when they have attained sexual maturity. The ancient Greeks not only accepted homosexuality as a natural phenomenon but regarded love of this kind as being on a higher plane than the love of a man for a woman. The Egyptians were of the same mind and spoke of the homosexual love of their two gods, Horus and Set. Islamic civilizations also regard homosexual love as a legitimate method of sexual expression and as a stepping-stone to full sexual maturity and marriage.

*The Invert's View of his own Disability.* – The homosexual who happens to live in a country in which homosexual practices have been made a penal offence is fully aware of the seriousness of the disability from which he suffers. He does not choose to express his sexual feelings in this way, but the necessity of doing so has been thrust upon him. Not that he himself considers his desires as being in any way abnormal. A desire for his own sex seems as natural to him as does the desire for a woman seem natural to the normally constituted man. To refer therefore to his unfortunate disability as a 'foul, unspeakable, unnatural, degraded vice', in other words, as a pernicious form of behaviour he has deliberately chosen, is as unjust as it is absurd.

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If the invert seeks medical aid in the hope of having his deviation corrected it is not so much because he has come to the conclusion that it is vicious as because the life of an outlaw has become insupportable to him. Now, in calling attention to these facts the writer is not suggesting that Western civilization should adopt an entirely different attitude and accept homosexuality as a normal method of expressing sexual feelings. All that he wishes to do is to bring home to readers the absurdity of regarding homosexuality as a cultivated vice for which imprisonment is the appropriate treatment. Not only does imprisonment fail to stamp out this deviation of the sexual urge, but it often converts a young man passing through a temporary phase of homosexuality into a permanent, habituated homosexual. Segregation of the sexes undoubtedly encourages homosexual fantasies and no better means could have been devised of preventing sexuality from finding its normal direction than sending a young homosexual to prison. This is particularly true of the present moment when prisons are so full that three prisoners often have to share a cell. Not only is the law, as it stands, making effective treatment of the homosexual more difficult but it is actually encouraging homosexuality. It may take a long time before public opinion becomes sufficiently strong to bring about a change in our legislation – politicians dislike handling unsavoury subjects that may deprive them of votes – but do not let us delude ourselves in the meantime that our treatment of the problem of homosexuality is anything other than barbarous and crude, as crude, indeed, as was the old treatment of unchaste wives by mutilating their noses.

It should also be borne in mind that the commonest form of contact between homosexuals is not what is called 'paedecatio', but some form of masturbation. Havelock Ellis estimated that 20 per cent of homosexuals avoid all forms of physical expression altogether and that 35 per cent of them restrict their practices to mutual masturbation. Now,

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however undesirable such behaviour is it does not inflict on the innocent partner the immense harm it is usually supposed to do. There is no evidence that it converts a youth into a homosexual and more often than not he quickly recovers from his unfortunate experience and forgets about it. It is only when a youth already has strong homosexual leanings that his experience is likely to have any lasting effect on him.

It is, of course, of the utmost importance that minors of both sexes should be protected from all forms of sexual assault, whether they be homosexual or heterosexual in character. To seduce the youth of either sex must therefore be made a penal offence whether the assault on them be homosexual or heterosexual. There should be an age of consent for youths as well as for girls and a man who has sexual intimacies with anyone below that age should be liable to prosecution. But he would be prosecuted not because his own sexuality happened to be of an abnormal pattern, but because he has assaulted an individual who was sexually immature. Homosexual practices between true inverters who have reached maturity should no longer be illegal provided that they do not offend the laws of decency.

France, Italy, Belgium, and Holland, in other words, all the countries influenced by the Code Napoléon, have found a much more humane attitude to this social problem and they do not interfere with homosexual practices provided there has been no violence, no outrage on a minor, and no offence against public decency. England and the United States are now the only first-class powers over which the ancient ecclesiastical jurisdiction against homosexuality still retains its former influence and, as usually happens when public opinion and the legal code are at variance, the law is brought into contempt. This makes the work of the police exceedingly difficult. What homosexual behaviour must be regarded as criminal and what can be winked at? Who is to be prosecuted and who can be left alone? It is also interesting to note that in France during the old monarchy, when

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a homosexual was liable to be burnt at the stake, sexual inversion was both fashionable and conspicuous, whereas in modern France under the Napoleonic code, homosexuality is unfashionable and very little in evidence. The mere fact that there are harsh laws against an activity may have the unexpected effect of investing it with a spurious distinction. Half the people who thronged the 'speakeasies' during the days of America's prohibition experiment would have remained at home, drinking water or lemonade, if alcohol had not been prohibited. No grounds whatever can be found for the retention of the ancient ecclesiastical enactment against homosexuality. It is as silly as it is cruel.

It was formerly asserted that homosexuals were only prosecuted when their behaviour became so scandalous that it was impossible for the police to refrain from taking action. This is no longer true for a directive has obviously gone out to the effect that the streets must be 'cleaned up', and as a result the courts are full of these unfortunate cases. The idea may have arisen in some official's mind that homosexuality is on the increase, but there is no reason to believe this to be true. Homosexuality is as old as mankind and in all probability its incidence has not varied very greatly. All that has happened is that at one period it has been recognized and regarded as permissible and at another discountenanced and driven under ground.

*The Cause of Homosexuality.* – Homosexuality has been submitted to intensive scientific study, but although a great deal has been learnt about it, there still remains the difficulty of deciding to what extent it is congenital and to what extent acquired. The truth, as is so often the case in such controversies, is that it is probably the one and the other; both genetic and acquired factors enter into its causation.

Those who emphasize the congenital factor in homosexuality state that 4 to 5 per cent of the population is so constituted that it is quite incapable of developing heterosexual desires. This small minority constitutes the inverts, or true

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and permanent homosexuals who were born with a congenital biogenetic anomaly which they will retain to the end of their days. No treatment can make, and no previous change in upbringing could have made, any difference to them. Sometimes these true inverts are distinguishable from their fellows by both physical and psychological characteristics approximating to those pertaining to the opposite sex, and sometimes they appear to be well developed, manly males. The distinctive characteristics of the more obvious types of invert are well known. Their skins are delicate and feminine, they have deposits of fat over their buttocks and thighs, they often talk in high-pitched voices and their mode of walking resembles that of a woman. Weil states also that their pelvic measurements approximate to those of the female rather than the male.

It is tempting to explain the possession of these feminine characteristics along biological lines and many authorities have done so. In Chapter 2 it was seen that male and female are not two sharply differentiated entities, but two conditions which pass imperceptibly the one into the other. A whole gamut of states lies between the two extremes of the masculine type of man and the feminine type of woman, with that rare entity, the true hermaphrodite, occupying the central position on the keyboard. Homosexuality can be looked upon as an intersexual condition lying towards the centre of the board, but a condition in which the functional disturbance is much greater than are the anatomical changes.

The view that the male homosexual is a man with an undue proportion of female hormones in him, and that the female homosexual is a woman with an excessive contribution of male hormones has been accepted by a number of authorities and it is a theory with much to commend it. It explains the appearance of the abnormal sexual desire early in life and the tendency for it to recur at such times as the climacteric when psychological powers of resistance are weakened and natural desires are likely to become more evident. It also



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makes it easy to understand why the true invert is unable, with the best will in the world, to change the direction of his desires and why all psychological treatment is likely to be useless in helping him to do so.

The abnormal direction taken by the sex-drive and the anatomical changes, if such be present, are sometimes associated with other peculiarities. Inverts are often of notably youthful appearance and behindhand in their psychosexual development. They have no liking for games or outdoor sports but often display great aptitude as actors. The last-named quality, in conjunction with their innate vanity, leads them to take pleasure in personal adornment, manifested sometimes in the wearing of jewellery.

But although strong support can be given to the view that the presence of an undue amount of female hormone and deficiency of male hormone in the body of the invert are responsible for the condition, equally strong arguments can be marshalled against it. One objection to the congenital theory is that the injection of large quantities of male hormone brings about no change; the invert is completely unaffected by such treatment however much it be pushed. Another argument that can be used against it is that neither castration, nor the giving of female hormones to an ordinary heterosexual male, have the effect of converting him into an invert. Castration changes a heterosexual man into a eunuch but it does not alter the direction of his sexual drive. So also does the administration of female hormones weaken a man's sexual desire but without changing its nature. All this suggests that a disturbance of the balance of male and female hormones is by no means the only factor in inversion.

*The View that Homosexuality is Acquired.* — Those who support this view that homosexuality is usually acquired fall into three main groups. The first is the Freudian group which maintains that all of us are psychologically and potentially bisexual and that we have to pass through a homosexual phase in the course of our sexual development. Freud taught

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that there are three stages in this pilgrimage. In the first stage of the journey the child is autoerotic, his attention being directed towards himself and his own genitalia, and this is the stage in which the habit of masturbation is likely to be acquired. Later, sexual interest turns towards companions of the same sex and this is the stage of ardent friendships, often without any obvious sexual colouring, but sometimes expressed in physical intimacies. This is followed by a turning of desire in the direction of the opposite sex and the attainment of full maturity. The sexual invert can be regarded as having remained stuck, or 'fixated', in an immature stage of development, or, in some cases, as having 'regressed' to it. The Freudian attributes this fixation to the individual's failure to resolve the famous 'Oedipus complex' with which we all of us are said to have to come to terms. Little support can be found for this view that an unresolved Oedipus complex is to blame for homosexuality. If it were the true cause of inversion the condition would be more readily amenable to psychoanalytical treatment.

The second, or Adlerian, group of psychologists attempts to explain homosexuality in terms of their own favourite passwords, the 'inferiority complex'. But unfortunately they have as little success in curing the homosexual by treating this complex as have the Freudians by resolving the Oedipus complex. The third group is less precise in its statements and contents itself by asserting that sexual inversion usually results from psychic shocks of a sexual nature suffered in earlier years. But there are many inverts who have remained inviolate and chaste throughout the whole of their non-adult lives and, as has already been said, there is little evidence that a homosexual experience at school determines the direction of the sexual urge in later years. •

*Treatment.* – Before discussing this it must be pointed out that the word homosexuality is very loosely used. As has been seen, a homosexual phase, conscious or unconscious, frequently occurs in the course of sexual development and it

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would be absurd to label a youth at this stage of his sexual growth a homosexual in need of treatment. All that can be said about him is that he is still sexually immature. A great deal of unnecessary anxiety has been occasioned to parents and teachers by taking too seriously homosexual practices in boarding-schools. School discipline must be maintained but the offences for which the miscreants are being punished should be accepted as comparatively harmless manifestations of adolescent sexuality. Within a year or two the sexual desire of these youths will, in all likelihood, have turned in the direction of the opposite sex. The term homosexual is also often applied to individuals who are really bisexual, or capable of having intercourse with either sex. Finally, it is used for those who are pseudo-homosexuals, or imitative homosexuals. True inversion is often associated with brilliant creative attainments and not infrequently linked with actual genius. Outstanding men of this kind attract followers and admirers and some of these disciples become so infatuated that they seek to imitate their leaders in every possible way, aping also their sexual behaviour. These imitators are usually either bisexual or heterosexual, and are only occasionally true inverts. It is better therefore to use the term homosexual for behaviour adopted by people who are potentially heterosexual or bisexual and to keep the word 'invert' for the congenital and permanently deviated individual.

*Preventive Treatment.* — As has been seen, a different emphasis has been placed by different authorities on the congenital and the acquired factors in the genesis of homosexuality and it can be accepted that in some cases the former bear a heavier responsibility for the condition and in other cases, the latter. As it is over upbringing alone that we are able to exercise any influence, it is upon the acquired factors that emphasis should be placed. What, it may be asked, are the home influences which are likely to be the most conducive to the development of homosexuality? There can be little doubt

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that predominance of the female influence in the home is one of the most important of these. Many homosexuals are either only sons, or the youngest members of the family. It is difficult for some mothers to part with their children and to send them out into the world to fend for themselves. They are often tempted to cling to the youngest and to keep him in babyish clothes and to retain his long hair, 'as charming as that of a girl'. 'Mother's darlings' have a good chance of becoming homosexuals if their congenital disposition is favourable to this. The propulsion of a boy in the direction of femininity is particularly liable to happen if there be no father in the home on which he is able to model himself, but an intense dislike of the father may have even a worse effect than his absence. Instead of imitating his father the boy may react strongly against him and learn to hate everything that pertains to the male. He may mould himself instead on his mother so that he grows up with feminine tastes and reactions, including those connected with sex.

Adler has emphasized the large part played by fear in the development of latent sexuality and particularly by fear of the opposite sex. The latter may assume many disguises and be manifested not only openly as fear of women in general, but also covertly as fear of scandal, fear of female entanglements, and fear of venereal disease. Because intimacies with a male are free from some of these terrors, they have a special attraction for a youth who has always been frightened of women.

Havelock Ellis has suggested that *chagrin d'amour* sometimes pushes a youth in the direction of homosexuality. Overcome by bitterness and disillusionment on account of what has happened, the abandoned lover turns against femininity in general and begins to look elsewhere, namely, in the direction of the male. Although frustration may occasionally act in this way, it is not likely to be other than a very rare event. The disillusioned young man is far more inclined to take temporary refuge in cynicism than to adopt

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homosexual practices. Should he do so it is not due to his frustration alone but because he has always had a strong element of homosexuality in his make-up.

The segregation of the sexes in separate schools and colleges has also been accused of encouraging homosexuality, and it is quite possible that it bears some measure of responsibility. Segregation is likely, at any rate, to delay the final orientation of sexuality in a heterosexual direction. It would be interesting to know whether homosexuality is less common amongst those who have been brought up in co-educational establishments, but I know of no statistics which throw any light on this question.

Having dealt with some of the factors which encourage latent homosexuality, it is now possible to discuss what can be done to prevent it. Of first importance is a virile upbringing for boys and the proximity of a revered father. If no father exists, some male must act as a substitute for him, an elder brother, a male guardian, relative, or friend. But a right relationship between the boy and his mother is as important as is the presence of a suitable father-figure. Hostility towards a mother can be as disastrous as over-dependence on her, for the boy is then liable to transfer his mother-hatred to women in general and to avoid all dealings with them, reserving his affection for members of his own sex. Finally, friendship between boys and girls should always be encouraged and an understanding attitude adopted when the first manifestations of adolescent love begin to appear. F. B. Strauss reports that the heterosexual development of one of his patients was indefinitely postponed through his family teasing him about his 'little sweetheart'. Archness and banter and remarks about 'calf love' are not only in bad taste, but may have disastrous psychological results for the adolescent. We grown-ups forget only too quickly how serious this calf-love was to us when we were in process of growing up.

What can the psychiatrist do to assist the adult homosexual when he applies to him for help? It must be admitted

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that he can do little or nothing to divert the desires of the true invert in a heterosexual direction. But, as has been emphasized, to have homosexual desires does not necessarily mean that the individual is a true invert. Many a young man is miserable because he believes himself to be an invert when actually he is only an adventitious, or facultative, homosexual, and it is only the trained psychiatrist who is capable of making the differential diagnosis between these two conditions. Should a young man be found on examination to belong to the latter class, the psychiatrist can do a great deal to hasten the advent of psycho-sexual maturity. If, on the other hand, he turns out to be a true invert, he is still able to help him to accept his lot and to make the best of his condition. Nor are these trivial benefits, for loss of all self-respect, associated with an intense feeling of guilt, are potent causes of a neurosis. In an American book written by a writer who is himself a homosexual, the following advice is given to those who feel the need for expert help. 'In the hands of a good psychologist many of your difficulties can be overcome. If your problems are of such a grave nature that you cannot cope with them, and if you have the wherewithal to obtain aid, then certainly you should take your story to the best available analyst or competently trained physician or psychologist.' (*The Homosexual in America*, by D. W. Cory.)

*Homosexuality and Marriage.* – The question of marriage sometimes crops up in connexion with homosexuality and well-meaning people have sometimes advised it as a method of treatment. Any general statement on this subject is exceedingly ill-advised for, as has been seen, homosexuality is a generic term used for many grades of sexual deviation. For the true invert marriage is impossible because a true invert is impotent with women and it is only the ambisexual individual who will succeed in consummating his marriage. For the bisexual man a successful marriage is possible provided that he signs a compact with himself to eschew all

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homosexual practices and fantasies in future. This coming to an understanding with himself will undoubtedly be needed, for homosexual urges and compulsions, and even strong ones, are likely to remain with him for a very long while. He may even have to resign himself to the fact that he will never obtain from heterosexual union the complete satisfaction which he formerly knew with his own sex. Before he actually marries he would be well-advised to take his future wife into his confidence with regard to his dual orientation, for women are very discerning and a wife is likely to discover, even without this warning, that there is something missing in her husband's behaviour towards her. The marriage can only prove a success therefore if both parties are aware of the difficulties that beset it and work together to overcome them. Happiness in marriage has to be earned and if this is true of the marriage of sexually mature people, it is doubly true when one of the partners of the marriage is bisexual.

In writing of the problems of the true invert Havelock Ellis states that the best method of tackling them is 'for the congenital invert . . . while retaining his own ideals or inner instincts' to resolve 'to forgo alike the attempt to become normal and the attempt to secure the grosser gratification of his abnormal desires, even although finding occasional auto-erotic relief inevitable.' No man ever had more understanding of the difficulties of the sexually deviated person than had Havelock Ellis, and although many years have passed since he wrote these words and much work has been done on the subject, his advice cannot be bettered. Fortunately the invert often possesses qualities which mitigate the hardness of his task. He is frequently an extremely gifted person who has diverted some of his libido successfully into non-sexual channels, and that homosexuality is common amongst men of exceptional ability was noted long ago by Dante. A youth's discovery that he is 'queer' and unlike other men often has the effect of driving him to seek distinction in

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other fields of endeavour so that he becomes a great scholar, artist, writer, or musician. By diverting his libido into these non-sexual channels he not only diminishes the need for finding a physical outlet for his abnormal desires, but also succeeds in regaining his own self-respect. Homosexuals often devote themselves with enthusiasm to various forms of social and philanthropic work and particularly to social work for the young; schoolmastering, the running of boys' clubs and scout camps and labour in the slums are the means by which many of the finer types of homosexuals escape from the difficult position in which they find themselves.

*Homosexuality in the Female.* – As in the case of male homosexuality, two groups of homosexual women can be distinguished. In the first group are those who display pronounced masculine traits. The secondary sexual characteristics in them are poorly developed, the breasts small, the voice low in timbre, the hair distribution approximates to that of the male, and the deposits of fat over the thighs and buttocks, characteristic of femininity, are absent. Many of these masculine women accentuate their already masculine appearance by keeping their hair short, by walking and moving like men and by dressing in male attire. They are often highly intellectual and also extremely able, as is also the case with the male invert. The second and larger group shows no sign of a masculine inheritance but are feminine both in appearance and behaviour, their homosexuality probably being psychologically determined. What complicates the picture still further is that some of the women who have adopted a masculine mode of life retain sexual desire for men, whilst the outwardly feminine types of women may be attracted only by their own sex. It is unwise to assume therefore that a woman who has a masculine appearance is necessarily a sexual invert. There may well be a different explanation of her man-like behaviour. For example, an inferiority feeling may have been responsible for impelling her in the direction of masculinity. Dr H. Deutsch



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gives an account of a Polish girl who at the age of eighteen possessed such pronouncedly masculine characteristics (a moustache, no breasts, etc.) that she felt inferior to all other women. She therefore abandoned femininity for good and decided that she would compensate for her lack of womanly charm by performing the heroic deeds of a man. The war came and she joined the Polish army as a nurse and later, by means of a clever stratagem, she disappeared from the hospital in which she had been working, donned masculine attire and was duly recruited as a soldier. Her girlish dreams being realized, Nature assumed charge of her and she fell headlong in love with a comrade in arms, thereby gaining a regimental reputation of being a homosexual. It is satisfactory to know that her heterosexual relationship had a very satisfactory result and resolved for good her psychological difficulties. Physical masculine traits were important factors in this case, but it is unlikely that a preponderance of male hormone was the direct cause of the Polish girl's masculine behaviour. This case illustrates the difficulty of differentiating between hormonal and psychogenic types of homosexuality.

It is a strange legal inconsistency that whereas homosexuality in a man is a penal offence, homosexuality in a woman is regarded as her own private affair. Yet if a deviated male is a potent danger to his fellowmen, surely a deviated female must also be a danger to girls. What, it may be asked, is the great difference between male and female homosexuality that one should have to be punished with savagery and the other dismissed as eccentric behaviour? Human conduct is remarkable for its inconsistencies, but here is an inconsistency which should not be dismissed with a shrug of the shoulders for it entails suffering to others.

## CHAPTER 13

### THE SOCIAL PROBLEMS CREATED BY SEXUALITY

As was seen in Chapter 6, sexual love in human beings has always been subjected to certain regulations and restraints and in no society, however primitive or remote in time, has complete freedom been granted to it. Sexuality and reproduction produce social problems which different communities have solved in different ways. It would be of interest to examine the various methods employed in dealing with them, but anthropologists have collected such a mass of material on this subject that to analyse it and draw conclusions from it would necessitate the writing of another book. Two things, however, become obvious from even a cursory glance at this anthropological data. The first is that all primitive societies frankly recognize sexuality as a fundamental fact of human life and they would regard a conspiracy to exclude it from everyday consideration as unthinkable. For the more primitive races love is a gift from the gods, to be revered and enjoyed as such. Why therefore should anyone maintain silence about it, or treat sexuality as a shameful thing? Only among a few exceptional tribes, for example, the Manus of the Admiralty Islands, is there to be found anything at all reminiscent of the puritan disposition to enshroud sexuality in secrecy and guilt. It is interesting to note that as a result of this exceptional attitude of the Manus to sexuality frigidity amongst their married women is by no means uncommon.

The second point that becomes clear from an examination of anthropological data is that many of the societies that are primitive and uncouth in their way of living are by no means primitive and uncouth in their treatment of sexuality. It is no

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exaggeration to say that there are Pacific Islanders who would be horrified by the crude attitude adopted by many Western married couples to sexuality. They would be incapable of regarding sexual intercourse as a coarse and rather ridiculous animal act required for the birth of a child. 'In some primitive societies,' writes M. Fortes, Reader in Social Anthropology at Oxford, 'this respect for the sex impulse takes the form of elaborate and solemn religious cults as sacred to them as the rites of the Church to a Christian and as significant in their social and personal lives. Frequently the paraphernalia of these cults include phallic symbols, as amongst some tribes of the Guinea Coast of Africa, and the ritual includes celebrations denounced by Western visitors as sexual orgies. Primitive people tend to be more consistent than we are, and when they say that sex is a gift of the gods to be rejoiced in and revered, they show that they mean it. On the other hand, in many primitive societies, the open recognition of sex is shown merely in the complete absence of pruriency with regard to it and in the ease with which it is referred to in all circumstances.' (M. Fortes: *Sex in Social Life*, Allen & Unwin.)

It has already been pointed out that marriage is an institution required for the birth and upbringing of children and that it is to be found in practically every form of society, primitive or otherwise. It is true that sexual motives enter into the marriage of primitive people, but they are not given the overwhelming significance that they have been given in the West. For the more primitive types of man and woman it is the social aspect of the marriage which takes pride of place and in many tribes, such as the Zulus and the Masai, a man is not regarded as being fully mature until he has emerged from the warrior grade and has married. He does not look upon his marriage as a means of satisfying his sexual desires – in all probability he has already found an outlet for these – but as the outward sign of his emancipation from youth and elevation to the position of elder of the

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tribe. It is an emblem of dignity and an indication that he has assumed new tribal responsibilities.

*Premarital Behaviour in Different Societies.* – The majority of primitive societies impose certain restrictions on the sexual behaviour of those who have not yet attained sexual maturity. Their general attitude to the problems of the unmarried is that sexual intimacies between adolescents are to be avoided but that a considerable amount of freedom may be accorded to members of both sexes who have attained adult life. In many tribes the passage from sexual immaturity to maturity is marked by the performance of certain rites at which sexual instruction is imparted to the initiates of both sexes. Most African boys are strictly forbidden to indulge in intercourse until these initiation ceremonies have been completed. What applies to the boys of the tribe applies with even greater force to the girls and in some cases the restrictions imposed on the latter are not removed even after the ceremonies have been completed. More often than not this stricter discipline is not designed for the benefit of the girl herself but for the sake of her future bridegroom, who prefers to wed a woman who is still a virgin. In contrast to this there exist tribes that consider it right and proper for a girl to have intercourse as soon as menstruation has begun.

The sexual code which rules in the West has always been a much stricter one. It has been designed to prevent any form of sexual intercourse taking place between adults until the union has been legalized by the ceremony of marriage. This ban on intimacies between the unmarried applies with particular force to women and because of this differentiation between the sexes, a double standard of sexual morality has tended to be substituted for the original one; what is wrong but can be tolerated in the case of a high-spirited youth cannot be excused in the case of his equally high-spirited sister. Now, whilst it is true that this difference of standard for the two sexes exists also in many primitive societies, so far as the behaviour of adolescents is concerned, it is rarely extended

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by these races to the behaviour of maturer people. There is, of course, an excuse for the establishment of a different standard for the two sexes and it must not be attributed entirely to male prejudice. A breach of the sexual moral code may have far more serious consequences for a woman than it has for a man, owing to the possibility of her becoming pregnant. It is Nature and not man alone that imposes a harsher rule on unmarried women.

*The Changing Sexual Code.* – In spite of the ban placed by Western society on the sexual activity of unmarried adults, there are many who refuse to obey it. According to the Kinsey Report more than 80 per cent of American males admitted that they had engaged in 'petting' before the age of twenty. Statistics showed that men from the higher educational levels of society usually obtained release from sexual tension in this way, whereas those of lower standing resorted more commonly to ordinary intercourse. There can be no doubt therefore that the strict standard of sexual behaviour demanded of the unmarried in the West is gradually being discarded by both sexes. This has been confirmed by other investigators. Terman's researches show a very marked difference between the premarital histories of the middle-aged and of the younger couples questioned on this subject. He found that the proportion of men and women who were still virgins at the time of their marriage had dropped steeply between the years 1910 and 1930, and he writes of the future, so far as America is concerned, as follows. 'If the drop should continue at the average rate shown for those born since 1890, virginity at marriage will be close to vanishing point for males born after 1930 and for females born after 1940. It is more likely that the rate of change will become somewhat retarded as the zero point is approached and that an occasional virgin will come to the marriage bed for a few decades beyond the dates indicated by the curve. It will be of no small interest to see how long the cultural ideal of the virgin marriage will survive as a moral code after its obser-

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vance has passed into history.' (L. M. Terman: *Psychological Factors in Marital Behaviour*, 1938.)

We have no statistics in this country which are comparable in size to those published in the Kinsey Reports but it can be assumed that the ideal of premarital chastity is on the wane here as well as in America. Nor need we be surprised at this when the many factors working in the direction of disobedience to the code of sexual behaviour are taken into account. The most important of these are economic conditions and the shortage of housing, which make it difficult, or impossible, for young people to marry at the early age at which their parents and grandparents married. Another potent factor is the decline in the influence of the Church, and it is the Church which has placed so strong an emphasis on sexual irregularities in the past that, to many people, the word 'immorality' has become synonymous with sexual laxity.

Whilst the restraining influence of the Churches has been receding sexuality is being exploited more and more for commercial purposes. The majority of Hollywood films rely on their erotic interest for their box-office success and the glamorous posters of the vendors of soap, face-creams, lipsticks, patent medicines, and nourishing beverages sell goods by the same means. In short, everything is being done to remind unmarried people of the pleasures that are being denied them and it is not surprising that this, combined with the putting back of the age of marriage and the widespread knowledge of birth control, has increased the number of men and women who are rebelling against the nominal sexual code.

What remedy is proposed for this by those who maintain that this code must be upheld at all costs? The one most frequently put forward is that marriage should be brought within the economic reach of the young – a suggestion which is manifestly impossible in a world in which the cost of living still continues to rise. It is true that during the years follow-

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ing the war many young people married and both parties continued to work but such marriages precluded the establishment of a home with children and many of them have ended in divorce. The other remedies suggested have already been discussed in Chapter 9 and need not be referred to again. All that can be said here is that the social problems with which Western communities are now faced are problems of great antiquity and problems which each nation and community has been compelled to solve in its own particular manner. When the various solutions that have been adopted are examined, they are found to be very few in number, early marriage, premarital 'affairs', and prostitution. The first two of these solutions have already been considered and all that remains to be done now is to discuss the third and least satisfactory solution of prostitution.

*Prostitution.* – Much has been written about the origin of prostitution, and some writers try to trace it back to the ancient temples dedicated to the worship of some god or goddess of love. Most nations had their love-goddesses, who were surrounded by their own priestesses. Goldberg gives an account of the Temple of Aphrodite at Corinth, a temple so large that it formed a city in itself, enclosed by a high stone wall. Within it were the houses of the priestesses, twelve hundred in number – priestesses who regarded themselves as the humble but sacred servants of the goddess they served. Recruited as young girls throughout the whole of Greece, they entered on a course of training which consisted of learning how to dress, to arrange their hair, to use perfumes and powders, and to arouse the passions of men. This they did without any mercenary motives. It was a rule that the priestess must ask nothing for herself, and must look upon the men who came to her not as personal lovers, but as worshippers of the great goddess Aphrodite. If she discharged her duties skilfully, the lover would present rich gifts to the temple, and this would be sufficient reward.

Winifred Richmond writes of Herodotus' description of a

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similar temple in Babylon to which every woman was forced to go, once in her lifetime, and offer herself to a stranger. 'The proud and wealthy drove in their coaches, and waited with their servants about them. Others sat with wreaths and ribbons on their heads. The strangers promenaded up and down before them, and each made his choice by throwing a coin in a woman's lap, saying "May Melita bless thee". He then drew his choice into the cypress grove by her ribbon. After this sacrifice of herself to the goddess, the woman returned home, and thereafter remained virtuous.'

If they prove nothing else, these pictures of the ancient priestesses show that in a woman's dedicating her greatest possessions – her beauty and her charm – to the service of her goddess the ancients saw nothing that was degrading. The idea of chastity for the sake of chastity had not yet arrived. A woman gave to the service of the temple her richest possession, and was honoured for her gift. Whether in so doing she laid the foundation-stone of that sorry modern building, the house of ill-fame, is extremely doubtful. Long before the age of Greece, women must have learnt to take advantage of men's need and to demand a price for satisfying it. That sex is marketable is known throughout the world, and must always have been known. Nor is she who markets her charms for monetary gain necessarily a prostitute. A modern woman can sell herself to a rich husband as well as to a rich lover, and in doing so she escapes being called a prostitute. The ancient priestess of Aphrodite gave her services freely to her goddess, and has earned herself this name. The study of sexual ethics leaves one bewildered and dismayed.

Other writers are inclined to trace back the rise of prostitution not so much to the temples, but to the growth of the marriage system. Havelock Ellis, in supporting this view, writes as follows: 'The history of the rise and development of prostitution enables us to see that prostitution is not an accident of our marriage system, but an essential constituent



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which appears concurrently with its other essential constituents. The gradual development of the family on a patriarchal and largely monogamic basis rendered it more and more difficult for a woman to dispose of her own person. She belonged in the first place to her own father, whose interest it was to guard her carefully until a husband appeared who could afford to purchase her. In the enhancement of her value the new idea of the value of virginity gradually developed, and where a virgin had previously meant a woman who was free to do as she liked with her own body, its meaning was now reversed, and it came to mean a woman who was precluded from having intercourse with men. When she was transferred from her father to her husband she was still guarded with the same care; husband and father alike found their interest in preserving their women from unmarried men. The situation thus produced resulted in the existence of a large body of young men who were not rich enough to obtain wives, and a large number of young women, not yet chosen as wives, and many of them could never expect to become wives. At such a point in social evolution prostitution is clearly inevitable; it is not so much the indispensable concomitant of marriage as an essential part of the whole system. Some of the superfluous or neglected women, utilizing their money value and perhaps at the same time reviving traditions of an earlier freedom, find their social function in selling their favours to gratify the temporary desires of the men who have not yet been able to acquire wives. Thus every link in the chain of the marriage system is firmly welded and the complete circle formed.'

There seems to be an inevitable disposition on the part of humanity to refuse recognition of a fundamental law—namely, the law of payment. Whilst it is undoubtedly true that for everything we possess something has been paid, few people are disposed to accept this principle. If therefore it be said that prostitution is one of the prices that we have paid for the institution of marriage, many people will regard this

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assertion as an attack on the marriage system. It is not an attack on marriage; it is merely a partial assessment of its price. The question whether what has been bought represents good value is not even discussed. Marriage may well be worth far more than we have paid for it, but that marriage, or anything else worth the having, can be purchased for nothing is clearly ridiculous.

In case it be thought that the idea that prostitution is a necessary corollary to marriage is an obsession of the sexologist, a man who by the very nature of his study is inclined to be unorthodox, the following quotations from other classes of writers are appended: 'The prostitute is the immoral guardian of public morality.' 'The prostitute fulfils a social mission; she is the guardian of virginal modesty, the channel to carry off adulterous desire, the protector of matrons who fear late maternity; it is her part to act as a shield to the female.' 'They sacrifice themselves for the republic, and make of their bodies a rampart for the protection of respectable females.' Finally, we have the words of that eminent author Lecky, who, after declaring prostitution to be 'the supreme type of vice', finishes by stating that the prostitute is 'the most efficient guardian of virtue.'

But the prostitute has not always been looked upon with such aversion. The Greek Hetairai were often treated with great respect. If reports are to be believed, they were not only beautiful and charming, but also intelligent and well-educated, and numbered amongst their admirers many of the greatest men in Greece. Although they were not allowed to attend religious ceremonies, they occupied prominent positions at the public games and at the theatre. They were also the great patronesses of art and learning, and, to quote Mantegazza, 'wrote more than one page in the history of Greece.' Amongst the most celebrated was Aspasia, the life-long companion and helpmate of Pericles.

There is an extremely interesting account in Xenophon of a visit paid by Socrates to one of the famous prostitutes

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of Greece. Not only does this provide us with an excellent view of prostitution at that time, but it allows us to see how the wisest and gentlest of men treated a woman of that type.

Socrates, having heard of the beauty of the courtesan Theodora, went with his disciples to ascertain for himself whether the report was true. He questioned her about the sources of the luxury of her dwelling and sketched to her the qualities she should cultivate in order to attract her lovers. She ought, he told her, to shut the door against the insolent, to watch her lovers in sickness, to rejoice greatly when they succeeded in anything honourable, to love tenderly those who loved her. Having carried on a cheerful and perfectly unembarrassed conversation with her, with no kind of reproach on his part, either expressed or implied, and with no trace either of the timidity or effrontery of conscious guilt on hers, the best and wisest of the Greeks left his hostess with a graceful compliment to her beauty.

In the Roman Empire prostitution sank to a lower level than in Greece, public girls being recruited from the slave population. Rome derived her culture from Greece, but debased everything she borrowed except army organization, the legal system, and the art of colonization. It was natural, therefore, that the Emperor Caligula should see in prostitution a means of replenishing the State coffers and impose a special tax on it. Constantine, influenced by the Church, looked on it with disfavour, and made male prostitution punishable by law. Theodosius and Justinian attempted a compromise. Realizing that the prostitute was a social necessity, they visited their wrath principally on the hangers-on of the sexual commerce, the pimps and the procuresses, and all who made an indecent profit out of the trade.

The Middle Ages proved difficult times for the prostitute. The scarlet woman became a living symbol of sin, and Charlemagne had the prostitutes dragged naked to the market-places and publicly whipped. At the same time that men were demanding their services and admitting that their

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existence was necessary to the State, prostitutes were driven from pillar to post, execrated, bullied, and even burnt at the stake on a trumped-up accusation of witchcraft. The Church, whose teaching on the subject of chastity was to a great extent responsible for all this public fury, now made efforts to combat it. Shelter was provided for unfortunate women, and attempts were made to convert them to a new way of life.

Later on, the existence of the prostitute was accepted. Since she could not be suppressed, she must be regulated. This is the point of view adopted by the majority of modern nations. Women plying the ancient trade have been required to register, to live in controlled houses, to reside in a certain quarter of the town – in other words, to conform to certain requirements. Provided they conform to these regulations they cannot be legally punished.

It is only during the last quarter of a century that public attention has again been directed to this ancient question. The public conscience could no longer look on the brothels in its cities without experiencing discomfort. This is the age of science, and the priest and the reformer having failed, the scientist has been called in to investigate the matter. Flexner embarked on a comprehensive study of prostitution in Europe, whilst Kneeland conducted a similar research in New York. Reports were made, committees set up, pamphlets issued, and a variety of decisions arrived at. Realizing that the question was one of international as well as of national importance, a Committee was formed under the aegis of the League of Nations to deal with the International Traffic in Women and Children. As a result of all these efforts the machinery employed by organized and commercial prostitution has been exposed, and much has been done to make it run less smoothly. Those who make profit from the buying and selling of women find that it is becoming more and more difficult and dangerous to draw dividends from their trade. Protests have also been raised against the licensing of houses, and a great clean-up has taken place

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in many cities. Prostitutes have been chivied out of theatres and lounges, moved on at street corners, and generally made to feel uncomfortable. Soliciting in the street has been made a punishable offence, and generally prostitution has been driven underground.

What, then, is the solution to the problem of prostitution? There is no final solution, for the selling of services for profit is a condition of life in all civilized communities. The artist must sell his pictures, the writer his books, the labourer his labour, and, if she has no other marketable assets, the impoverished woman must sell her sex. It is only wholesale, big-business prostitution that can be eradicated. In this direction much has already been done, and it is all to the good. But we cannot afford to be complacent over these achievements, for there is much that remains to be done. The drug traffickers and the dealers in women make big profits and there will always be some who are prepared to take big risks. Vigilance must remain unrelenting.

Nor is the trafficker in woman-flesh the only factor in prostitution that must be dealt with. Poverty and poor conditions of living, slums, unemployment, drunkenness, and mental deficiency all tend to swell the unhappy army of prostitution. It is not from any innate wish of their own, but from necessity that most women enter this profession. Indeed, psychological investigation has shown that, far from being over-sexed, the majority of prostitutes are under-sexed. Many of them are even homosexual, with no feeling whatever for men. Winifred Richmond states that 'not infrequently a girl sex-delinquent is a girl struggling against homosexual tendencies, who chooses relations with boys as the lesser of two evils.' 'In an effort to assure herself of her normality she becomes promiscuous.' Others, though heterosexual, are naturally frigid. A woman of this type has 'divested the sex act of all its personal elements, has become merely an automaton upon which man, any man, can carry out his desire. Frigidity is a requisite of her trade, without

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which she could not continue; if she gave herself with warm feeling to every man who sought her, she would soon be exhausted.'

The modern prostitute is therefore a very different person from the gifted companion of Pericles or the brilliant courtesan of medieval France. She is, indeed, the product of the industrial age, and he who would deal successfully with the problems that she raises will also have to deal successfully with the thousand and one problems propounded by the great god Mammon. Strictly speaking, prostitution is not an evil created by sexuality, but a vice that is born of poverty and greed.

## CHAPTER 14

### SEX AND EDUCATION

No one who has taken the trouble to read the foregoing chapters of this book can fail to realize how important it is that children should receive sane teaching on the subject of sex. It is in childhood that the foundations of our characters are being laid down and the psychoanalyst has proved to us how lasting are the effects of inexperienced handling in the earlier years of our lives. This subject was discussed also in Chapters 11 and 12 and it was seen there that a faulty upbringing may be responsible for the development of various forms of sexual deviation in later years. Parents, nurses, and school-teachers who are maladjusted themselves are a fruitful cause of troubles which may take years of patient work on the part of a psychologist to eradicate. Children are still brought up in ignorance of facts that are of vital concern to them or, worse still, adopt through imitation the faulty attitudes of the adults who surround them. In spite of the improvements that have undoubtedly been made in the sex education of children, much still remains to be done. Only when a healthy and natural upbringing becomes the rule rather than the exception will the number of sexual neurotics fall and men and women who have never come to terms with their sexuality become rarities.

So much has been written on the subject of the special instruction of children in sexual matters during the last few decades that most educated parents now realize that the old conspiracy of silence must be broken, and that a measure of information must be imparted. Therefore at a certain age, and primed perhaps with knowledge gleaned out of some suitable book, they face their offspring for a talk concerning the 'facts of life'. The atmosphere is usually tense, and some-

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times it is difficult to say who of the two is the more embarrassed – the parent or the child. Still, the job has to be done, and, after an inward struggle on the part of the parent and with embarrassment to the child, it is completed, to the immense relief of both parties. The sex instruction of the young has been accomplished, and the customary relationship between parent and child can be resumed.

This is exactly how it should *not* be done. A carefully staged talk like this leaves in the mind of the adolescent the idea that sexuality is something that is kept in a special compartment under lock and key, that it is a mysterious and dangerous entity that must be made the subject of an embarrassing talk. Instead of this being the case, sex and all that pertains to it is so closely woven into the fabric of our lives that it is impossible to separate it from it. When the attitude to sexuality is wrong, everything else is usually wrong, so that it is impossible to effect an adjustment in the one without altering the other. 'Sex,' said a nine-year-old child quoted in W. V. Redmund's book on Sex Education, 'must be life,' and no wiser comment could have been made. Sex is so inextricably interwoven into the warp and woof of our behaviour that it may be said to be life itself. This being so, it begins in the cradle, and only ends with the grave. Why therefore this special talk at adolescence, as though before that age it had never existed?

Even if we discount the theories of the Freudian concerning the first manifestations of the libido, it is obvious that as early as the end of the second year of life a child becomes acutely aware of his own genitalia, and in another year he may even be asking such questions as 'Why am I different from my sister?' Later come other riddles. 'Where do kittens come from?' 'How was I made, and where did I come from?' These questions are framed in the same spirit as the thousand and one other conundrums that a child puts to his parents, and should be answered in the same way. All authorities are agreed that the sexual education of children should begin, so



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far as its elements are concerned, as early as possible, and that a wise and tender mother is the ideal person to undertake it.

It must be remembered that a child's desire to know where babies come from is not a sign of sexuality, but a desire to discover an important fact. It is as natural as is his desire to know where the sun has gone to when it drops down below the horizon. And the answer should be given as simply and as readily. In satisfying his curiosity concerning the sun it is not necessary to embark on a long astronomical lecture; in answering about babies, the simplest possible explanation can be given. Once that point has been settled the child's curiosity shifts in another direction, and perhaps in one that provides riddles that are less easily answered. 'Why is the fire hot?' 'What makes the sky blue?' It is all part of the mother's work, the satisfying of this restless, insatiable curiosity of a child concerning a world that is entirely new to it.

Proceeding in this natural method, the child will learn and assimilate all that he wants to know, and all that it is necessary for him to understand, long before he has reached the age of puberty. Not only does he know and accept, but the knowledge has taken its right place in his mind. Curiosity having been satisfied, the subject is dropped, perhaps to be resumed when some new conundrums appear on his mental horizon.

But what about those embarrassing remarks made in the presence of strangers by the child who has been so brought up. How are they to be guarded against? Only by telling the child the truth — namely, that some people are silly about their own bodies and feel shy when certain things are talked about. Therefore, because it makes them feel uncomfortable, it is better not to talk about them in their presence. A child often shows more understanding than an adult, and will readily accept and act on such a suggestion.

The value that an early and natural sex education has in

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after-life is shown by Dr Katharine Davies' investigation of married women. When divided into two groups of those who regarded themselves as happily or as unhappily married, 57 per cent of the former were found to have received some sort of sex education in early life, but only 44 per cent of the latter. Undoubtedly, were they available, the figure given by patients applying for help on the score of some sexual difficulty would be still more convincing. Ignorance provides an excellent soil for neurosis, and although statistics cannot be produced, it is no exaggeration to say that three out of every four men treated for impotence state either that they had no sex education at all, or else that they were brought up to believe that all sexual manifestations were shameful or evil.

As a child grows older the elementary knowledge imparted at home is supplemented by more detailed and scientific knowledge gained at school. Many parents would, indeed, prefer to leave the task of sexual enlightenment entirely to the schoolmaster and schoolmistress. From the experience of the British Social Biology Council this would certainly seem to be the case. Yet, in spite of a general recognition of the importance of biology in the education of the child, the Executive Committee of the National Union of Teachers not very long ago passed a motion that 'the giving of sex instruction is undesirable and against the interests of the child in elementary schools.' The present position is therefore that whilst many parents cast their responsibilities on the teacher, the teacher in turn refers them back to the parents. The truth is that both methods of instruction are necessary, the parents satisfying the natural curiosity at home, and the teacher supplementing the elementary knowledge so gained by means of the biology lessons at school. The two methods of education are not alternative, they are complementary.

The course taken by the biological teaching at school must, of course, be left to the teacher. If, however, the teaching is primarily for the sake of instruction in sex, it is a mis-

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take, as is sometimes done, to linger too long in the far distance with the reproduction of plants and lowly organisms, and then slowly approach the methods that reign in the mammals. The study of the lower forms of life may, indeed, be made so impersonal that to the child reproduction would appear to have no possible reference to human existence. Tucker and Prout in their *Sex Education in Schools* state that in some classes in which this system was followed 'as soon as the reproduction of mammals was reached, there was a noticeable lack of ease, usually on the part of the teacher, and a consequent unrest of stiffening of the children. Often someone who feels compelled for reasons of scientific sequence to deal with the internal fertilization of such a type as the rabbit does so with just embarrassment.' This shows that there is a tendency on the part of teachers to linger in the safe area of pollen and stigma and to glide quickly over the thin ice of mammalian reproduction. This is natural, because most teachers were themselves brought up in the days when an open reference to sexual processes caused shame and confusion. It was this legacy of the past that was responsible for the answer given by one instructress in biology. To the direct question, 'Do babies grow in the same way as seeds when they are not yet born?' she blurted out, 'Oh, no, babies grow more like chickens hatch, only it is not nearly such a beautiful process.'

Although ridicule has been cast at the carefully staged 'talk about the facts of life', arranged by some parents, this does not mean that adolescence does not bring with it new problems for which help may be needed. This is far from being the case. Puberty is a critical period in a boy's and a girl's life, and, unfortunately for some children, a period also of conflict. It provides the first experience of those more troubled waters of adulthood on which they are about to embark. At such a time an adolescent should feel that, if he requires it, he will be able to fall back on the advice of the two people who have taught him most of what he already

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knows – his parents. If, however, these have not previously answered his questions, but have shown embarrassment whenever he has approached them on the 'indelicate' subject of sex, these are the last two people to whom he is likely to go for help in his new difficulties.

*The Problems of Puberty.* – The age of puberty is influenced by climate and race, but in this country it usually falls between the ages of twelve and fifteen. In those races that live in warm or tropical climates it is likely to be two years earlier. It is also believed that children living in cities reach puberty sooner than those in the country, and that the child brought up in luxury matures more rapidly than one whose living conditions are inferior.

One of the problems with which a boy is faced at this time is the beginning of nocturnal emissions, or what are popularly known as 'wet dreams'. This is, of course, an entirely physiological phenomenon, and is a means of getting rid of the accumulated secretions of the now intensely active sexual glands. Usually emissions provide a relief from the sexual tension associated with the accumulation of secretion and may mark the beginning of a sexual rhythm. Conscious as well as unconscious sexual desire is present at such a time, which is also marked by the occurrence of frequent erections. Sometimes masturbation is resorted to in an attempt to get relief, but if the situation be left to itself, relief is finally obtained from a seminal emission, accompanied or not accompanied by a sexual dream. Since individuals vary in their make-up, some experience a short rhythm of sexual tension and others a longer one, the frequency of such an occurrence is very different in different boys. In general, however, it may be said that an average frequency of emission is in the neighbourhood of three to four a month.

It is easy to see how great a problem the beginning of these emissions will provide for a sensitive boy who has previously received no instruction. Still greater will be his problem if,

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through the behaviour of the adults who surround him, he has gained the impression that all manifestations of this strange force in himself are sinful or harmful. Suddenly, and through no action of his own, this force has become exceedingly active in him, and strange happenings are occurring at night. The more anxious he becomes, the more his attention is caught up in his genitalia, with the result that the trouble increases. He is a prisoner in a vicious circle, and both physical and psychic health are likely to be affected.

If, however, he has learnt beforehand that there is nothing evil in sexuality, that it is natural that now that he is approaching manhood this should happen, and that it is Nature's way of getting rid of unwanted secretion, he will pay little attention to it. Hard physical exercise, occupations that take his attention away from sexual subjects, and congenial companionship will all help him to adjust to the new condition.

It must be remembered also that at puberty a boy is likely to become very self-conscious about any supposed peculiarity that marks him off from his fellows. Of special importance in this connexion is any peculiarity of the genitalia, such as an incompletely descended testicle, a long prepuce, or what is considered to be smallness of the male organ. Continual brooding on any feature that distinguishes him from his companions is very likely, if not dealt with, to lead to a permanent feeling of inferiority. There are, indeed, men whose whole lives have been shaped by some trivial feature of their genitalia. Beginning with a dislike of undressing in front of his companions, a youth who is self-conscious about his genital endowment may in time withdraw more and more from his fellows, until he ends up as a bachelor recluse. It is necessary, therefore, to give sympathetic attention to any doubts that an adolescent boy may express concerning his own genitalia, or, if there be found anything requiring attention, to seek medical aid.

But the help of parents is not necessarily confined to the

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giving of information. Sex, as has repeatedly been emphasized, cannot be treated as a separate entity; it must be drawn into some general philosophy of life. The stirring of sexuality at puberty brings with it new privileges, new responsibilities, and new difficulties. There is no easy way of growing up, no set programme for the adolescent to follow. Particularly is this so in the case of the difficulties that the youth will have to face when his sexual desire is more fully awake. No father can provide for his grown-up son a ready-made solution for the problems that he will then be called upon to solve. All that he can do is to recall how he himself set about the work of overcoming his difficulties, and if he believes that his own way was good, recommend it to his son. 'To preach morality,' wrote Schopenhauer, 'is good, but to find a foundation for morality is hard.' "

It is as well to remember that no parents should expect the sexual confidence of their adolescent children as their right. The idea of discussing their erotic experiences with their parents never enters the heads of many adolescents, even although previously they have brought to them their intimate problems. All that parents can do is to make their children feel that if they are in difficulties they can bring them and be sure of being listened to with sympathy. Nor should any advice be given with too great a solemnity. For this reason, if for no other, the practice of combining so-called sex instruction with such a solemn occasion as Confirmation is to be deprecated. The boy with a sense of humour is likely then to treat the whole matter as a ribald joke, and the sensitive boy to believe that there is only one form of immorality – namely, the sexual one. Sexual taboos and religion become inextricably mixed in his mind, to the detriment of the two things that are most important to him – the obtaining of a spiritual outlook on life and a healthy attitude to sex.

It is impossible to discuss the question of sex and education without referring to masturbation. More nonsense has

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been written on this subject than on any other sexual phenomenon. This pernicious nonsense – for it is as harmful as it is absurd – has emanated chiefly from two sources: firstly from quacks who, by creating anxiety, expect to reap a harvest, and secondly by members of that school of morality who consider that to gain their own ends it is justifiable to frighten people into ‘virtue’. It is probably the last-named group that has achieved the greater output of harmful literature on the subject, and in it every evil from impotence to insanity has been stated to be the fruits of self-abuse.

When we come to investigate masturbation dispassionately and with no end in view other than that of discovering the truth, we find that it is so widely practised, both in the animal and in the human world, that it can be said to be physiological. Dr Dukes, former medical officer to Rugby, stated that the percentage of boys who occasionally masturbated at that famous school was ninety to ninety-five. Robie also in America found that few or none among a large number of persons of both sexes had not had experience of it. Dr Katharine Davies, confining her attention to women, calculated that amongst 1,000 American college women above the age of twenty-one, 60 per cent gave histories of masturbation. Her figures also suggest that girls usually masturbate at an earlier age than do boys.

It is therefore better to admit from the start that masturbation is the rule rather than the exception. We cannot, in consequence, regard the habit as a perversion, but must consider it as a normal phenomenon. Venture has even referred to masturbation as ‘the germ of what later will be love.’ It often appears very early in life, having as its motive merely physical pleasure unaccompanied by any erotic imagery, as innocent of sexuality as scratching an area of the body that itches. Later it may gather a new significance, which slowly approximates to the act of sexual union. For this reason Venture looked upon masturbation, not as the

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vice it was pictured by moralists and teachers, but as 'the natural passage by which is reached the warm and generous love of youth, and later the calm and positive matrimonial love of maturity.'

Kretschner in a later communication takes the same view: 'Masturbation or self-abuse is in itself no perversion, but (apart from excessive indulgence) a harmless physiological transitional phase and by-product of the healthy sexual impulse; it acts as a safety-valve when sexual intercourse is prevented by one of the many inevitable obstacles erected by civilized communal life. Masturbation can only be counted as a perversion when it is practised for its own sake – i.e., when it acquires a greater value than sexual intercourse, and is substituted for it even when coitus is legitimately possible.'

Herein lies the whole crux of the matter. In a transitional stage of development masturbation is natural; as a permanent condition it is a perversion.

It must be remembered, as Kretschner himself pointed out, that earlier medical views on the subject were strongly coloured by the moral outlook of the age. 'Venereal disease and sexual neurasthenia formed a narrower complex for the medical mind, which was saturated with the popular moral feeling that every sort of ethnically illegitimate sexual activity bore in its wake a kind of divine judgement, in the form of the most severe physical and psychic disorders – tabes dorsalis, softening of the brain, consumption.' Fortunately the medical profession has rid itself of these superstitions, and it is only amongst a few misguided members of the teaching and ecclesiastical professions that they continue to have their influence.

The chief danger in masturbation lies in the inner conflict that it is likely to engender and in the excess that it may easily encourage. Unless control is exercised by the masturbator, the habit is likely to grow. He who practises it then feels that he is in the power of something that is stronger than himself. Self-reproach, shame, and fear add their



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burdens, so that the masturbator in time becomes affected with the mentality of the slave and the lackey. He hates himself and his 'vice', and, fearing that his condition must be obvious to the whole of the outside world, tries to escape from his fellows. Whilst the healthy-minded man or woman will come through this stage and forget about it, the over-sensitive youth may easily transform himself into a neurotic.

In dealing with masturbation in the very young the most important point for the parent to bear in mind is that he should not attribute to the habit too much importance. It is impossible to stop it by any form of precaution or by admonition or punishment. All that these measures will achieve will be to put the child on his guard and make his masturbation more secret. What is likely to prove more effective is to help him to find so many more interesting occupations that there is no need for him to fall back on masturbation. It is the lonely and unoccupied child that masturbates. The richer and happier his life, the less likely will he be tempted to seek sensation in such an unsatisfactory way.

With an older boy a more direct approach is possible. He may be told that it would be better to reduce, or even to give up entirely this form of self-gratification. Now that he is approaching manhood the things of childhood can be put aside, and it is as necessary to give up this habit as it is to give up thumb-sucking. Again it is important to guard against over-emphasis on its importance.

The problems of girls at puberty are very similar to those encountered by boys, excepting that for the phenomenon of sexual emission is substituted that of the menstrual flow. Girls who happen to hear from their mothers incidentally of this mark of womanhood are saved from the shock that suddenly being brought face to face with it may produce. Like many other sexual phenomena, menstruation has given rise to many strange superstitions and taboos. These are particularly common amongst savages, where the menstrual 'effluvia' are regarded as having magical and usually highly

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injurious properties. In civilized communities the idea of ill health remains attached to the phenomenon, and a girl may easily learn to attach too much importance to the 'curse' of womanhood. Neither sentimentality nor resentment should enter into a mother's talk with her daughter. 'This is the way it happens', is explanation enough, since it is impossible to furnish a learned exposition on the physiological significance of menstruation.

Although strictly speaking this does not fall under the heading of sex education, it may be as well to add that for an adolescent's welfare and mental health parents must learn, as the years go by, to retire more and more into the background. It is a hard lesson, and yet it is certain that the parents who strive least to retain their hold over their children succeed best in establishing a healthy and stable relationship that stands the test of time. One cannot live by another's ideals, and, in order that the children should obtain their own, this phase of emotional emancipation must be helped rather than hindered. Each new generation finds its own slogans, and platitudes of the order of 'treat every woman as though she were your sister' are now as outworn as they are silly. A girl and a boy must find their own solution for the sexual problems which lie ahead of them, and even if they are not those of their parents, they may nevertheless be based on some ideal. It is better that a youth and girl should live according to their own lights and their own ideals than that they should attempt to mould their lives into conformity with some plan that has been forced on them by others.

What is of importance is that underlying the whole of their lives there should be the search for the eternal values of goodness, truth, and beauty.

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Kenneth Walker is a consultant surgeon in London. He is on the honorary staff of several hospitals and was a Hunterian Professor of the Royal College of Surgeons. He has interested himself in many things besides surgery—in philosophy and religion, in Eastern literature, and in various social problems. Apart from a considerable number of technical works, he has published several books for the layman, the best known of which are probably *Diagnosis of Man, Meaning and Purpose* (Pelican A211), and *I Talk of Dreams. The Physiology of Sex* (A71), *Human Physiology* (A102), and *Sex and Society* (A332) were specially written for the Pelican series as was *Patients and Doctors* (A387).

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